

“Many people nowadays are apt to boast of our great civilization and of the wonders of science. Science has indeed done wonders. But . . . it is well to remember that in many ways man has not made very great progress from the other animals. It may be that in certain ways some animals are superior to him still. We look down upon the insects as almost the lowest of living things, and yet these tiny things have learnt the art of cooperation and of sacrifice for the common good far better than man. If mutual cooperation and sacrifice for the good of society are the tests of civilization, we may say that the White Ant and the Ant are in this respect superior to man.”

—Jawaharlal Nehru

GLIMPSES OF WORLD HISTORY

By Jawaharlal Nehru

with an introduction by the Editor

THE JOHN DAY COMPANY • NEW YORK



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Library of Congress Catalogue Card Number: 60-8700

MANUFACTURED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

## INTRODUCTION:

# NEHRU'S PHILOSOPHY OF HISTORY

The many years that Jawaharlal Nehru spent in jail for his leadership in the struggle for India's freedom served him as a postgraduate course of education in history, literature and philosophy. Behind prison bars, Nehru enriched and deepened his mind. This aspect of his career began at the age of thirty-two, when the young Cambridge-educated lawyer was first jailed and when, he said, "I started my pilgrimages to prison." There were eight subsequent imprisonments, so that he finally concluded ironically that his only career was the "popular and widely practised profession of gaol-going in India."

Prison life, Nehru said, had its advantages. "It brings both leisure and a measure of detachment." He was permitted to borrow books and to fill many notebooks. Above all, he had the chance, and took advantage of it, to reflect, to think about his own role in life and about human destiny in general:

I am not prepared to say that the many years I have spent in gaol have been the sweetest in my life, but I must say that reading and writing have helped me wonderfully to get through them. I am not a literary man, and I am not a historian; what, indeed, am I?

The answer is that he was a philosopher in action.

Of all the incarcerations, the most fruitful period was the three-year stretch from 1930 to 1933. It was at that time that Nehru wrote an extraordinary series of letters to his little daughter Indira—now Mrs. Indira Gandhi—to help shape her education. This “mountain of letters,” many of them intimate and personal, was ultimately published in a thousand-page volume entitled *Glimpses of World History*.\*

The last letter, written on August 9, 1933, gives the flavor of Nehru’s style and feeling:

The end of my two-year term draws near. . . . So ends my sixth sentence, and I shall go out into the wide world, but to what purpose? . . . It was winter when I came. Winter gave place to our brief spring, slain all too soon by the summer heat; and then, when the ground was parched and dry and men and beasts panted for breath, came the monsoon, with its bountiful supply of fresh and cool rain-water. Autumn followed, and the sky was wonderfully clear and blue . . . The year’s cycle was over, and again it began: winter and spring and summer and the rainy season. I have sat here, writing to you and thinking of you, and watched the seasons go by, and listened to the pitapat of the rain on my barrack roof—

*O doux bruit de la pluie,  
Par terre et sur les toits!  
Pour un cœur qui s'ennuie,  
Oh! le chant de la pluie!*

The *Glimpses of World History* is a remarkable achievement on any level, but it is particularly striking as having been written by a prisoner who had to rely to a large extent on his memory. Although Nehru had no good reference works in prison, the accuracy of his vast array of data is

\* First published in 1934; revised and up-to-date edition, 1939; first American edition, 1942.

astonishingly high. *Glimpses* is not a history in the traditional sense, that is, a consecutive narration, but in its scope and universality it is comparable to H. G. Wells' *Outline of History*. Apart from that, *Glimpses* affords a rare insight into Nehru's personal philosophy and political ideas. The letters on world history, written when Nehru was still a relatively obscure figure, go far to explain the later Nehru, the world statesman and architect of modern India. Despite his modest disclaimer that the letters were but "superficial sketches joined together by a thin thread," they actually contain a coherent philosophy of history.

There are four main categories in Nehru's *Weltanschauung*. These may be described as universalism, rationalism, moralism, and Marxism.

His view of history is a sweeping one. The central idea in his thinking is the development of Man, rising from barbarism to civilization. The values of civilization—education, science, justice, art, liberty and social co-operation—are not confined to any one culture or people. They are universal, created at different times by different peoples. Civilizations rise and fall. They flourish and decay. Even after disappearance, they leave something for the human heritage:

Great empires have risen and fallen and been forgotten by man for thousands of years, till their remains were dug up again by patient explorers from under the sands that covered them. And yet many an idea . . . has survived and proved stronger and more persistent than the empire.

Hence Nehru has no emotional commitment to any one culture or nationality. Although an Indian patriot, he has no chauvinistic or racial bias. He is keenly aware that India had been a great center of civilization, and might be again, but that there were also other superior civilizations—ancient Egypt, China and Rome, for example. He has an historic

appreciation of Christianity, but he does not consider it in any way superior to, say, Buddhism or Confucianism, which, indeed, may have supplied the Christian religion with fundamental ideas. He realizes that the modern age is dominated by the West, and has a deep respect for its achievements in science and technology, but does not feel that this superiority is either exclusive or permanent. The scientific values of the West have spread, and are spreading, to other cultures and geographic areas. In brief, Nehru is neither Asia-centric nor Europe-centric. His is truly a world view. He thinks in terms of humanity and not of nationality. Thus, in commenting on Edward Gibbon's remark that under the Roman Empire in the Second Century, A.D., "the human race was most happy and prosperous," Nehru points out:

I am afraid Gibbon, with all his learning, has said something with which most people will certainly hesitate to agree. He talks of the human race, meaning thereby the Mediterranean world chiefly, for he could have had little or no knowledge of India or China or ancient Egypt.

Next to universalism, rationalism is a basic ingredient in Nehru's thought. The traditional Indian mysticism seems to be lacking in him, possibly because he was educated in England and steeped in Western literary culture. His rational approach to life is clearly seen in his attitude toward science and technology, and religion. He regards science as a major triumph of the human mind, although, as was his master, Gandhi, he is critical of the misuses of science, mainly in its application to war and destruction. Properly utilized, science and its offspring, the machine, can liberate man from eternal drudgery, illness and want. But it can also be used for the production of devastating bombs and disease-carrying bacteria "thrown from the aeroplanes." Will mankind use science rationally, or will the irrational triumph? Nehru, the ration-

alist, can only express a hope for the sensible application of science, but reason (and a knowledge of history) stir lurking doubts in his mind:

We cannot tear the veil from the future. We see two processes going on today in the world, two rival and contradictory processes. One is the progress of co-operation and reason, and the building up of the structure of civilization; the other a destructive process, a tearing up of everything, an attempt by mankind to commit suicide. And both go faster and faster, and both arm themselves with the weapons and technique of science. Which will win?

Nehru's rationalism is particularly evident in his attitude toward organized religion. He is critical of all established religions on two main grounds. One is that they are built on dogmatism and credulity, and not on reason or sense ("Philosophy is a dangerous thing for any dogmatic religion; it makes people think"). The other is that religions tend to exploit the people materially and to create conditions that help misery to flourish.

The lesson of history, as Nehru sees it, is that organized religion tends to be the enemy of man's own best interests. Its ideology produces intellectual shackles that enslave the mind: "The chains which sometimes tie up our bodies are bad enough; but the invisible chains consisting of ideas and prejudices which tie up our minds are far worse." By shackling the mind, religion prevents it from functioning rationally in the solution of the problems of this world.

Many an organized religion, Nehru points out, perpetuates human misery by preaching that unhappiness and poverty are the inevitable lot of man in this world. It tells its followers that there is nothing they could or should do about their misery, but that if they meekly accept their wretchedness, they will be rewarded in the hereafter. To a rational man,

according to Nehru, such a philosophy is juvenile. Religion's promises of "heaven or paradise or whatever it may be called" remind him, he says, of the child that behaves itself "in the hope of being rewarded with a jam puff." Grown-up persons who behave in a like manner must, therefore, be considered childish. "For, after all, there is no essential difference between the jam puff and the idea of paradise."

In essence, the rationalist Nehru sees religion as a business established and maintained for the benefit of a few at the expense of the many. In this regard, he finds no difference among the world's established religions. He considers them all alike in their exploitation of the credulous. "In every religion this is so—Hinduism, Christianity, Islam, Zoroastrianism. Each has its own methods of making money out of the faith of the faithful." Even in the United States, which he regards as the "most advanced of countries," religion is "a big industry." As for himself personally, he has no attachment to any ecclesiastical system and no concern with the hereafter. He is of this world:

I am afraid the next world does not interest me. My mind is full of what I should do in this world, and if I see my way clearly here, I am content. If my duty here is clear to me, I do not trouble myself about any other world.

This brings one to the third element in Nehru's philosophy, namely, his moralism. Without being a member of any church or sect, he is imbued with a pervasive moral sense. Nehru derives his morality from the wide stream of Buddhism. His morality hinges around two central ideas: the notion of duty and the idea of humanity. A person is obligated to serve his fellow men, rather than to concentrate selfishly on himself. Nehru sums up this position with a quotation from the *Bhagavata* in Sanskrit:

*I desire not the supreme state of bliss with its eight perfections, nor the cessation of re-birth. May I take up the sorrow of all creatures who suffer and enter into them so that they may be made free from grief.*

The obligation to serve extends beyond any particular group or even nation. It embraces mankind. The moral man, says Nehru, is obligated to work for the "larger good—the good of society, of our country, of humanity." His aim must be to fight against injustice, oppression, and misery wherever they are found. Hence Nehru's view of history contains strong moral judgments: he is unsparing in his condemnation of tyranny and cruelty in all their forms. A profoundly moral man, he does not pretend to be objective where evil is concerned. He considers it an obligation to translate thought into action for the elimination of all that is ugly in society and to fight for the creation of a just and human civilization. For, he says, "we owe a duty to the future also."

This belief in service to society and to humanity helps to explain Nehru's Marxism. His Marxism, however, is not of the Russian or Communist variety. It does not have the doctrinal rigidity that is associated with the rulers of Moscow and Peiping. It subscribes neither to the Communist dogmatism in ideas nor to its brutality in action. Nehru's Marxism is, rather, of a democratic and mildly Socialist nature. It is closer to that of the British Labour Party and the West European Social Democrats than to Red Chinese or Soviet doctrines.

Two general Marxist propositions color Nehru's view of history and society. They are both explicit and implicit. One proposition is that the world has always consisted of exploiters and exploited. The other is that historic movements, institutions and ideas are economically determined. Capitalism he regards as a system that, in the past, exploited the masses; while Soviet Communism, although politically oppressive, he



sees as one that operates for the benefit of the common people. He suggests that whatever happened in history had its roots in economic inequality. Poetry and war, for example, could both be explained in the same way. "Cultures generally," he writes, "are monopolies of the well-to-do classes. Poetry and culture have little place in a poor man's hut; they are not meant for empty stomachs." Similarly, there are economic causes behind wars. Nehru explains that World War I, for instance, was due to the greed of industrialists and imperialists: "It was a rich man's game played with the lives of the people, and mostly of the young."

Nehru feels, therefore, that social ills, being economically determined, must be economically cured. Any approach to reform must be economic in its nature. To eliminate inequality and injustice, and to establish true democracy where people would enjoy political freedom and economic security, it is not enough to vote for a few good people or to oust a few knavish politicians. It is, rather, necessary to transform the whole economic system:

Some people . . . think that if good people would but get together they could convert the wicked by moral exhortations and pointing out to them the error of their ways. This is a very misleading idea, for the fault does not lie with individuals, but with a wrong system.

Finally, Nehru views economic and social problems, including world peace and freedom, from a global angle. Asia and Europe, he says, are but "geographical expressions." The real question is not which nation or region achieves its goals, but whether humanity does. The problems today are world problems and can only be solved on a world scale:

Such a solution can only mean the ending of poverty and misery everywhere. This may take a long time, but we must aim at this, and at nothing less than this. Only then can we have real culture

and civilization based on equality, where there is no exploitation of any country or class. Such a society will be a creative and progressive society, adapting itself to changing circumstances, and basing itself on the co-operation of its members. And ultimately it must spread all over the world. There will be no danger of such a civilization collapsing or decaying, as the old civilizations did.

Thus Nehru, in his philosophy of history, is a spokesman for humanity and its evolution from barbarism to civilization. The voice is the voice of new-old Asia, but the aspirations are uttered with the accents of mankind.

\* \* \*

This work is a condensation of *Glimpses of World History*. A vast number of historic minutiae, detailing comparatively obscure events, especially in remote parts of Asia, have been eliminated. Most remarks of a personal nature, as well as dates and such facts as are easily available in standard reference works, have also been excised from the present edition.

Since this is not designed to be a world history, no attempt was made to include every phase of the development of mankind. Certain historic movements and events—the Crusades, the Spanish Empire, the Arab world after World War I, to mention some—were omitted primarily because in the larger work they were treated with dry factuality or without any fresh viewpoint. The guiding principle in the condensation has been universality of interest combined with unconventionality of interpretation. The main emphasis throughout has been on the grand sweep of history, particularly where Nehru indulges in philosophic reflections and trenchant generalizations. In that sense, the work may be considered a philosophy of history illustrated by certain broad aspects of the record of humanity.

Not a word has been changed or added except as occasionally indicated by brackets or by a footnote. All footnotes are the editor's.

—SAUL K. PADOVER

*New York, 1960*

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## 1. THE MEANING OF HISTORY

Nearly all of us think that the history of our own country, whichever that might be, is more glorious and more worthy of study than the histories of other countries. It is so easy to fall into the trap. It was, indeed, to prevent this happening that I began writing, and yet, sometimes, I have felt that I am making this very mistake. What am I to do if my own education was defective and the history I was taught was topsy-turvy? I have tried to make amends for it by further study in the seclusion of prison. But I cannot remove from the gallery of my mind the pictures of persons and events which I hung there in my boyhood and youth. And these pictures colour my outlook on history.

I cannot help writing about many famous men who fill the pages of history books. They are often interesting in their own way, and they help us to understand the times in which they lived. But history is not just a record of the doings of big men, of kings and emperors and the like. If it were so, history might as well shut up shop now; for kings and emperors have almost ceased to strut about the world's stage. But the really great men and women do not, of course, require thrones or crowns or jewels or titles to show them off. It is only the kings and the princelets, who have nothing in them but their kingships and principedoms, who have to put on their liveries and uniforms to hide the nakedness underneath. And unhappily many of us are taken in and deluded by this outward show and make the mistake of

Calling a crowned man royal  
That was no more than a king.

Real history should deal, not with a few individuals here and there, but with the people who make up a nation, who work and by their labour produce the necessities and luxuries of life, and who in a thousand different ways act and react on each other. Such a history of man would really be a fascinating story. It would be the story of man's struggle through the ages against Nature and the elements, against wild beasts and the jungle and, last and most difficult of all, against some of his own kind who have tried to keep him down and to exploit him for their own benefit. It is the story of man's struggle for a living. And because, in order to live, certain things, like food and shelter and clothing in cold climates, are necessary, those who have controlled these necessities have lorded it over man. The rulers and the bosses have had authority because they owned or controlled some essential of livelihood, and this control gave them the power to starve people into submission. And so we see the strange sight of large masses being exploited by the comparatively few; of some who earn without working at all, and of vast numbers who work but earn very little.

The savage, hunting alone, gradually forms a family; and the whole household work together and for each other. Many households co-operate together to form the village, and workers and merchants and artisans of different villages later join together to form guilds of craftsmen. Gradually you see the social unit growing. To begin with, it was the individual, the savage. There was no society of any kind. The family was the next bigger unit, and then the village and the group of villages. Why did this social unit grow? It was the struggle for a living that forced growth and co-operation, for co-operation in defence against the common enemy and in attack was obviously far more effective than

single-handed defence or attack. Even more so was co-operation in work helpful. By working together they could produce far more food and other necessities than by working singly. This co-operation in work meant that the economic unit was also evolving, from the individual savage, who hunted for himself, into large groups. Indeed, it was probably this growth of the economic unit, ever pushed on by man's struggle for a living, that resulted in the growth of society and of the social unit. Right through the long stretches of history we see this growth in the midst of almost interminable conflict and misery, and sometimes even a relapse. But do not imagine that this growth means necessarily that the world has progressed greatly or is a far happier place than it was. Perhaps it is better than it was; but it is very far from perfection, and there is misery enough everywhere.

## 2. MAN'S QUEST

Of man's trail I have written above, since he emerged stumbling and slouching from the jungle. It has been a long trail of many thousands of years. And yet how short a time it is if you compare it to the earth's story and the ages and æons of time before man came! But for us man is naturally more interesting than all the great animals that existed before him; he is interesting because he brought a new thing with him which the others do not seem to have had. This was mind—curiosity—the desire to find out and learn. So from the earliest days began man's quest. Observe a little baby, how it looks at the new and wonderful world about it; how it begins to recognize things and people; how it learns. Look at a little girl; if she



is a healthy and wide-awake person she will ask so many questions about so many things. Even so, in the morning of history when man was young and the world was new and wonderful, and rather fearsome to him, he must have looked and stared all around him, and asked questions. Who was he to ask except himself? There was no one else to answer. But he had a wonderful little thing—a mind—and with the help of this, slowly and painfully, he went on storing his experiences and learning from them. So from the earliest times until to-day man's quest has gone on, and he has found out many things, but many still remain, and as he advances on his trail, he discovers vast new tracts stretching out before him, which show to him how far he is still from the end of his quest—if there is such an end.

What has been this quest of man, and whither does he journey? For thousands of years men have tried to answer these questions. Religion and philosophy and science have all considered them, and given many answers. I shall not trouble you with these answers, for the sufficient reason that I do not know most of them. But, in the main, religion has attempted to give a complete and dogmatic answer, and has often cared little for the mind, but has sought to enforce obedience to its decisions in various ways. Science gives a doubting and hesitating reply, for it is of the nature of science not to dogmatize, but to experiment and reason and rely on the mind of man. I need hardly tell you that my preferences are all for science and the methods of science.

We may not be able to answer these questions about man's quest with any assurance, but we can see that the quest itself has taken two lines. Man has looked outside himself as well as inside; he has tried to understand Nature, and he has also tried to understand himself. The quest is really one and the same, for man is part of Nature. "Know thyself," said the old philosophers of India and Greece; and the *Upanishads* contain the record of the ceaseless and rather wonderful strivings after this knowledge by the old Aryan Indians. The

other knowledge of Nature has been the special province of science, and our modern world is witness to the great progress made therein. Science, indeed, is spreading out its wings even farther now, and taking charge of both lines of this quest and co-ordinating them. It is looking up with confidence to the most distant stars, and it tells us also of the wonderful little things in continuous motion—the electrons and protons—of which all matter consists.

The mind of man has carried man a long way in his voyage of discovery. As he has learnt to understand Nature more he has utilized it and harnessed it to his own advantage, and thus he has won more power. But unhappily he has not always known how to use this new power, and he has often misused it. Science itself has been used by him chiefly to supply him with terrible weapons to kill his brother and destroy the very civilization that he has built up with so much labour.

### 3. FOOD AND THE CONTROL OF NATURE

The early men had a hard life even to find food. They hunted and gathered nuts and fruits from day to day, and wandered from place to place in search of food. Gradually tribes grew up. These were really large families living together and hunting together, because it was safer to be together than alone. Then came a great change—the discovery of agriculture, which made a tremendous difference. People found it much easier to grow food on the land by the methods of agriculture than to hunt all the time. And ploughing and sowing and harvesting meant living on the land. They

could not just wander about as they used to, but had to remain near their fields. So grew up villages and towns.

Agriculture also brought about other changes. The food that was produced by the land was much more than could be used up at once. This excess or surplus was stored up. Life became a little more complicated than it used to be in the old days of hunting, and different classes of people did the actual work in the fields and elsewhere, and some did the managing and organizing. The managers and organizers gradually became more powerful, and became patriarchs and rulers and kings and nobles. And, having the power to do so, they kept for themselves a great deal of the excess or surplus food that was produced. Thus they became richer, while those who worked in the fields got just enough food to live on. A time came later when these managers and organizers became too lazy or incompetent to do even the work of organizing. They did nothing, but they took good care to take a fat share of the food produced by the workers. And they began to think that they had every right to live in this way on the labour of others without doing anything themselves.

So you will see that the coming of agriculture made a vast difference to life. By improving the method of getting food, by making it easier to get it, agriculture changed the whole basis of society. It gave people leisure. Different classes grew up. Everybody was not busy in getting food, and so some people could take to other work. Various kinds of crafts grew up and new professions were formed. Power, however, chiefly rested with the organizing class.

You will find in later history also how great changes have been brought about by new ways of producing food and other necessities. Man began to require many other things almost as much as food. So that any great change in the methods of production resulted in great changes in society. To give you one big instance of it: when steam was applied

to working factories and moving railways and ships, a great change was made in the methods of production and distribution. The steam factories could make things far more quickly than the artisans and craftsmen could with their hands or simple tools. The big machine was really an enormous tool. And the railway and the steamship helped in taking food and the products of factories quickly to distant countries. You can well imagine what a difference this must have made all over the world.

New and quicker ways of producing food and other things have been discovered in history from time to time. And you would, of course, think that if better methods were used for production, much more would be produced, and the world would be richer and every one would have more. You would be partly right and partly wrong. Better methods of production have certainly made the world richer. But which part of the world? It is obvious enough that there is great poverty and misery. Why? Where do the riches go to? It is a strange thing that in spite of more and more wealth being produced, the poor have remained poor. They have made some little progress in certain countries, but it is very little compared to the new wealth produced. We can easily see, however, to whom this wealth largely goes. It goes to those who, usually being the managers or organizers, see to it that they get the lion's share of everything good. And, stranger still, classes have grown up in society of people who do not even pretend to do any work, and yet who take this lion's share of the work of others! And these classes are honoured; and some foolish people imagine that it is degrading to have to work for one's living! Such is the topsy-turvy condition of our world. Is it surprising that the peasant in his field and the worker in his factory are poor, although they produce the food and wealth of the world? We talk of freedom, but what will any freedom be worth unless it puts an end to this topsy-turvydom, and gives to the man who does the work the fruits

of his toil? Big, fat books have been written on politics and the art of government, on economics and how the nation's wealth should be distributed. Learned professors lecture on these subjects. But, while people talk and discuss, those who work suffer. Two hundred years ago a famous Frenchman, Voltaire, said of politicians and the like that "they have discovered in their fine politics the art of causing those to die of hunger who, cultivating the earth, give the means of life to others."

Still, ancient man advanced and gradually encroached upon wild Nature. He cut the forests and built the houses and tilled the land. Man is supposed to have conquered Nature to some extent. People talk of the conquest of Nature. This is loose talk and is not quite correct. It is far better to say that man has begun to understand Nature, and the more he has understood, the more he has been able to co-operate with Nature and to utilize it for his own purposes. In the old days men were afraid of Nature and of natural phenomena. Instead of trying to understand them, they tried to worship and offer peace offerings, as if Nature were a wild beast which had to be appeased and cajoled. Thus thunder and lightning and epidemic diseases frightened them, and they thought that these could be prevented only by offerings. Many simple people think that an eclipse of the sun or moon is a terrible calamity. Instead of trying to understand that it is a very simple natural occurrence, people needlessly excite themselves about it, and fast and bathe to protect the sun or the moon! The sun and the moon are quite capable of looking after themselves. We need not worry about them.

## 4. THE RISE OF RELIGIONS BEFORE CHRIST

Let us march on the long road of history. We have reached a big milestone, 2,500 years ago, or to put it a little differently, about six hundred years before Christ. Do not think this is an accurate date. I am merely giving you a rough period of time. About this time we find a number of great men, great thinkers, founders of religions, in different countries, from China and India to Persia and Greece. They did not live at exactly the same time. But they were near enough to each other in point of time to make this period of the sixth century before Christ a period of great interest. There must have been a wave of thought going through the world, a wave of discontent with existing conditions and of hope and aspiration for something better. For remember that the great founders of religions were always seeking something better and trying to change their people and improve them and lessen their misery. They were always revolutionaries who were not afraid of attacking existing evils. Where old tradition had gone wrong or where it prevented future growth, they attacked it and removed it without fear. And, above all, they set an example of noble living which for vast numbers of people, generation after generation, became an ideal and an inspiration.

In India, in that sixth century before Christ, we had the Buddha and Mahavira; in China, Confucius and Lao-Tse; in Persia, Zarathushtra or Zoroaster; in the Greek island of Samos, Pythagoras.

Zoroaster of Persia is said to have been the founder of Zoroastrianism; but I am not sure if it is quite correct to call him

the founder. It is better perhaps to say that he gave a new direction and a new form to the old thought and religion of Persia. For a long time past this religion has hardly existed in Persia.

In China, there were two great men, Confucius and Lao-Tse, during this period. A more correct way of writing Confucius is Kong Fu-Tse. Neither of these men was a founder of a religion in the ordinary sense of the word. They laid down systems of morals and social behaviour, what one should do and what one should not do. But after their deaths numerous temples were built to their memory in China, and their books were as much respected by the Chinese as the *Vedas* by the Hindus or the Bible by the Christians. And one of the results of the Confucian teaching has been to make the Chinese people the most courteous and perfect-mannered and cultured in the world.

In India there were Mahavira and the Buddha. Mahavira started the Jain religion as it exists to-day. His real name was Vardhamana, Mahavira being the title of greatness given to him. Jains live largely in western India and in Kathiawad, and to-day they are often included among the Hindus. They have beautiful temples in Kathiawad and in Mount Abu in Rajputana. They are very great believers in *ahimsa* or non-violence, and are wholly against doing anything which might cause injury to any living being. In this connection, it might interest you to know that Pythagoras was a strict vegetarian and insisted on all his pupils and *chelas* being vegetarians.

We come now to Gautama, the Buddha. He was, as you no doubt know, a *Kshattriya*, a prince of a royal house, and Siddhartha was his name. His mother was Queen Maya—"joyously revered by all, even as the young moon strong and calm of purpose as the earth, pure of heart as the lotus was Maya, the great Lady," says the old chronicle. His parents brought him up in comfort and luxury, and tried to keep him away from all sight of suffering or misery. But this was

not possible, and tradition says that he did see poverty and suffering and death, and that he was greatly affected by them. There was no peace for him then in his palace, and all the luxury with which he was surrounded, and even his beautiful young wife whom he loved, could not keep his mind away from suffering humanity. And the thought grew in him and the desire to find a remedy for these evils, till he could bear it no longer; and, in the silence of the night, he left his palace and his dear ones, and marched out alone into the wide world to find answers to the questions which troubled him. Long and weary was his search for these answers. At last, many years later, it is said that, sitting under a *peepal* tree in Gaya, enlightenment came to him, and he became the Buddha, the "Enlightened." And the tree under which he had sat came to be known as the Bodhi tree, the Tree of Enlightenment. In the Deer Park at Sarnath, called Isipatana then, under the shadow of ancient Kashi, Buddha began his teaching. He pointed out the "path of good living." He condemned the sacrifices of all manner of things to the gods, and said we must sacrifice, instead, our anger and hatred and envy and wrong-thinking.

When Buddha was born the old Vedic religion prevailed in India. But already it had changed and fallen from its high estate. The Brahmin priests had introduced all manner of rites and *pujas* and superstition, for the more there is of *pūja* the more do the priests flourish. Caste was becoming stricter, and the common people were frightened by omens and spells and witchcraft and quackery. The priests got the people under their control by these methods and challenged the power of the *Kshattriya* rulers. There was thus rivalry between the *Kshattriyas* and the Brahmins. Buddha came as a great popular reformer, and he attacked this priestly tyranny and all the evils which had crept into the old Vedic religion. He laid stress on people living a good life and performing good deeds, and not performing *pūjas* and the like. He or-



ganized the Buddhist *Sangha*, an association of monks and nuns, who followed his teaching.

Buddhism, as a religion, did not spread much in India for some time. Later, we shall see how it spread and how again, in India, it almost ceased to exist as a separate religion. While it triumphed in distant countries from Ceylon to China, in India, the land of its birth, Buddhism was absorbed back into Brahminism or Hinduism.

What, then, is one to do with religion? For some people religion means the other world: heaven, paradise or whatever it may be called. In the hope of going to heaven they are religious or do certain things. This reminds me of the child who behaves in the hope of being rewarded with a jam puff or *jalebi*! If the child is always thinking of the jam puff or the *jalebi*, you would not say that it had been properly trained, would you? Much less would you approve of boys and girls who did everything for the sake of jam puffs and the like. What, then, shall we say of grown-up persons who think and act in this way? For, after all, there is no essential difference between the jam puff and the idea of paradise. We are all more or less selfish. But we try to train up our children so that they may become as unselfish as possible. At any rate, our ideals should be wholly unselfish, so that we may try to live up to them.

We all desire to achieve, to see the result of our actions. That is natural. But what do we aim at? Are we concerned with ourselves only or with the larger good—the good of society, of our country, or of humanity? After all, this larger good will include us also. Some days ago I think I gave you a Sanskrit verse in one of my letters. This stated that the individual should be sacrificed for the family, the family for the community, and the community for the country. I shall give you the translation of another verse from Sanskrit. This is from the *Bhagavata*. It runs thus: “I desire not the supreme state of bliss with its eight perfections, nor the cessation of

re-birth. May I take up the sorrow of all creatures who suffer and enter into them so that they may be made free from grief."

One religious man says this, and another says that. And, often enough, each one of them considers the other a fool or a knave. Who is right? As they talk of things which cannot be seen or proved, it is difficult to settle the argument. But it seems rather presumptuous of both of them to talk with certainty of such matters and to break each other's heads over them. Most of us are narrow-minded and not very wise. Can we presume to imagine that we know the whole truth and to force this down the throat of our neighbour? It may be we are right. It may be that our neighbour is also right. If you see a flower on a tree, you do not call it the tree. If another person sees the leaf only, and yet another the trunk, each has seen part of the tree only. How foolish it would be for each one of them to say that the tree was the flower only or the leaf or the trunk, and to fight over this!

I am afraid the next world does not interest me. My mind is full of what I should do in this world, and if I see my way clearly here, I am content. If my duty here is clear to me, I do not trouble myself about any other world.

## 5. THE GLORY THAT WAS GREECE

Let us go to old Greece and Persia and consider for a while their wars with each other. The great empire of Persia [was] under a ruler called by the Greeks Darius. This empire of Darius was a great one not only in extent but also in organization. It extended from Asia Minor to the Indus, and Egypt was part of it, and so also were some Greek cities of Asia Minor. Right across this vast empire ran good roads

along which went regularly the imperial post. Darius, for some reason or other, decided to conquer the Greek City-States, and during these wars some very famous battles of history took place.

The accounts that we have of these wars were written by a Greek historian named Herodotus, who lived very soon after the events he recorded.\* He was, of course, partial to the Greeks, but his account is very interesting.

The first Persian attack on Greece failed because the Persian army suffered greatly during its march from disease and lack of food. It did not even reach Greece, but had to go back. Then came the second attack in 490 B.C. The Persian army avoided the land route this time and came by sea, and landed at a place called Marathon, near Athens. The Athenians were greatly alarmed, for the fame of the Persian Empire was great. In their fear, the Athenians tried to make up with their old enemies the Spartans and appealed to them for help against the common enemy. But even before the Spartans could arrive, the Athenians succeeded in defeating the Persian army. This was at the famous battle of Marathon, which took place in 490 B.C.

It seems curious that a small Greek City-State could have defeated the army of a great empire. But this is not so strange as it might appear. The Greeks were fighting near their home and for their home whilst the Persian army was far from its homelands. It was a mixed army of soldiers from all parts of the Persian Empire. They fought because they were paid for it; they were not interested very much in the conquest of Greece. The Athenians, on the other hand, fought for their freedom. They preferred to die rather than lose their freedom, and those who are prepared to die for any cause are seldom defeated.

[Another great Persian army under Xerxes, who had suc-

\* The *History* of Herodotus (ca.484-425 B.C., can be found in many editions and translations.

ceeded Darius in 486 B.C.,] advanced by land, and a multitude of ships accompanied it by sea. But the sea sided with the Greeks and destroyed most of the ships in a great storm. The Hellenes or Greeks were frightened at this great host, and forgetting all their quarrels, they united against the invader. They retreated before the Persians and tried to stop them at a place named Thermopylæ. This was a very narrow path, with the mountain on one side and the sea on the other, so that even a few persons could defend it against a host. Here was placed Leonidas with 300 Spartans to defend the pass to death. Right well did these gallant men serve their country on that fateful day, just ten years after Marathon. They held the host of the Persians while the Greek army retreated. Man after man fell in that narrow pass, and man after man replaced them, and the Persian army could not advance. Leonidas and his 300 comrades lay dead at Thermopylæ before the Persians could go ahead. In the year 480 B.C. this took place, 2,410 years ago, and even to-day one's heart thrills to think of this unconquerable courage; even to-day the traveller to Thermopylæ may see with tear-dimmed eyes the message, engraved in stone, of Leonidas and his colleagues:

Go tell to Sparta, thou that passest by,  
That here obedient to her words we lie.

Wonderful is the courage that conquers death! Leonidas and Thermopylæ live for evermore, and even we in distant India feel a thrill when we think of them.

Thermopylæ stopped the Persian army for a while. But not for long. The Greeks retreated before them and some Greek cities even surrendered to them. The proud Athenians, however, preferred to leave their dear city to destruction rather than surrender; and the whole population went away, mostly on the ships. The Persians entered the deserted city and burnt it. The Athenian fleet had, however, not yet been de-

feated, and a great battle took place near Salamis. The Persian ships were destroyed, and Xerxes, thoroughly disheartened by this disaster, went back to Persia.

Persia remained a great empire for some time longer, but Marathon and Salamis pointed the way to its decline. For those who lived in those days it must have been amazing to see this vast empire totter. Herodotus thought over it and drew a moral from it. He says that a nation's history has three stages: success; then as a consequence of success, arrogance and injustice; and then, as a consequence of these, downfall.

The victories of the Hellenes or Greeks over the Persians had two results. The Persian Empire gradually declined and grew weaker, and the Greeks entered into a brilliant period of their history. This brilliance was short-lived in the life of a nation. It lasted less than two hundred years altogether. It was not a greatness of wide empire, like Persia or the other empires that had gone before. Later the great Alexander arose and for a brief while astonished the world by his conquests. But we are not now dealing with him. We are discussing the period between the Persian wars and the coming of Alexander—a period of about 150 years from Thermopylæ and Salamis. The Persian danger had united the Greeks. When this danger was removed, they again fell apart and soon started quarrelling with each other. In particular the City-States of Athens and Sparta were bitter rivals. But we shall not trouble ourselves about their quarrels. They have no importance, and we only remember them because of the greatness of Greece in those days in other ways.

We have only a few books, a few statues, a few ruins of those days of Greece. Yet these few are such as to fill us with admiration and to make us wonder at the many-sided greatness of the men of Hellas. How rich their minds must have been and how deft their hands, to produce their beautiful statuary and their buildings! Phidias was a famous sculptor of those days, but there were many others of renown

also. Their plays—tragedies and comedies—are still among the greatest of their kind. Sophocles and Æschylus and Euripides and Aristophanes and Pindar and Menander and Sappho and others. . . . You will read their works and realize something of the glory that was Greece.

This period of Greek history is a warning to us as to how we should read the history of any country. If we paid attention merely to the petty wars and all the other pettiness that prevailed in the Greek States, what would we know of them? If we are to understand them we must enter into their thought and try to appreciate what they felt and did.

Athens especially became famous during this period. It had a great statesman for its leader. Pericles was his name, and for thirty years he held power in Athens. During this period Athens became a noble city, full of beautiful buildings and great artists and great thinkers. Even now it is spoken of as the Athens of Pericles and we talk of the Age of Pericles.

Our friend Herodotus, the historian, who lived about this time in Athens, thought about this growth of Athens and, as he was fond of moralizing, he drew a moral from it. He says in his history that:

The power of Athens grew; and here is evidence—and there is proof of it everywhere—that liberty is a good thing. While the Athenians were despotically governed, they were not superior in war to any of their neighbours, but when they got rid of their despot, they far surpassed them. This shows that in subjection they did not exert themselves, but they were working for a master, but when they became free each individual keenly did his best on his own account.

I have mentioned the names of some of the great ones of those times. One of the greatest of that, or any time, I have not yet mentioned. His name was Socrates. He was a philosopher, always searching for truth. To him the only thing worth having was true knowledge, and he often discussed

difficult questions with his friends and acquaintances, so that out of the discussions truth might emerge. He had many disciples or *chelas*, and the greatest of these was Plato. Plato wrote many books which have come down to us, and it is from these books that we know a great deal of his master, Socrates. Evidently governments do not like people who are always trying to find out things; they do not like the search for truth. The Athenian Government—this was just after the time of Pericles—did not like the methods of Socrates, and they held a trial and condemned him to death. They told him that if he promised to give up his discussions with people and changed his ways they would let him off. But he refused to do so and preferred the cup of poison, which brought him death, to giving up what he considered his duty. On the point of death almost he addressed his accusers and judges, the Athenians, and said:

If you propose to acquit me on condition that I abandon my search for truth, I will say: I thank you, O Athenians, but I will obey God, who as I believe set me this task, rather than you, and so long as I have breath and strength I will never cease from my occupation with philosophy. I will continue the practice of accosting whomever I meet and saying to him, "Are you ashamed of setting your heart on wealth and honours while you have no care for wisdom and truth and making your soul better?" I know not what death is—it may be a good thing, and I am not afraid of it. But I do know that it is a bad thing to desert one's post and I prefer what may be good to what I know to be bad.

In life Socrates served the cause of truth and knowledge well, but better still he served it in his death.

In these days you will often read or hear discussions and arguments on many problems—on Socialism and Capitalism and many other things. There is a great deal of suffering and injustice in the world, and many people are thoroughly dis-

satisfied with it, and they seek to change it. Plato also thought of problems of government, and he has written about them. Thus even in those days people were thinking of how to shape the government of a country and society so that there may be greater happiness all round.

When Plato was getting old, another Greek, who has become famous, was coming to the front. His name was Aristotle. He had been the private tutor of Alexander the Great, and Alexander helped him greatly with his work. Aristotle did not trouble himself with problems of philosophy, like Socrates and Plato. He was more interested in observing things in Nature and in understanding the ways of Nature. This is called Natural Philosophy or, more often now, Science. Thus Aristotle was one of the early scientists.

## 6. JESUS AND CHRISTIANITY

The story of Christ or Jesus, as his name was, is given in the New Testament of the Bible. In these accounts given in the Gospels little is said about his youth. He was born at Nazareth, he preached in Galilee, and he came to Jerusalem when he was over thirty. Soon after he was tried and sentenced by the Roman governor, Pontius Pilate. It is not clear what Jesus did or where he went before he started his preaching. All over Central Asia, in Kashmir and Ladakh and Tibet and even farther north, there is still a strong belief that Jesus or Isa travelled about there. Some people believe that he visited India also. It is not possible to say anything with certainty, and indeed most authorities who have studied the life of Jesus do not believe that Jesus came to India or Central Asia. But there is nothing inherently improbable in his having done so. In those days the great universities of India, specially



Takshashila in the north-west, attracted earnest students from distant countries, and Jesus might well have come there in quest of knowledge. In many respects the teaching of Jesus is so similar to Gautama's teaching that it seems highly probable that he was fully acquainted with it. But Buddhism was sufficiently known in other countries, and Jesus could well have known of it without coming to India.

Religions, as every school-girl knows, have led to conflict and bitter struggles. But it is interesting to watch the beginnings of the world-religions and to compare them. There is so much that is similar in their outlook and their teaching that one wonders why people should be foolish enough to quarrel about details and unessentials. But the early teachings are added to and distorted till it is difficult to recognize them; and the place of the teacher is taken by narrow-minded and intolerant bigots. Often enough religion has served as a handmaiden to politics and imperialism. It was the old Roman policy to cultivate superstition for the benefit, or rather for the exploitation, of the masses, for it was easier to keep down the people if they were superstitious. The Roman aristocrats would consent to dabble in high philosophy, but what was good for them was not good or safe for the masses. Machiavelli, a famous Italian of a later day, who has written a book on politics,\* states that religion is necessary for government, and that it may be the duty of a ruler to support a religion which he believes to be false. Even in recent times we have had innumerable instances of imperialism advancing under the cloak of religion. It is not surprising that Karl Marx wrote that "Religion is the opium of the masses."

Jesus was a Jew, and the Jews were and are a peculiar and strangely persevering people. After a brief period of glory in the days of David and Solomon they fell on evil days. Even this glory was on a small scale, but it was magni-

\* Niccolo Machiavelli (1469-1527) was the author of the classic work on politics, *The Prince*, which was published in 1532.

fied in their imaginations till it became a kind of Golden Age of the past, which would come again at the appointed time when the Jews would become great and powerful. They spread out all over the Roman Empire and elsewhere, but held together, firm in the belief that their day of glory was coming and that a messiah would usher this in. It is one of the wonders of history how the Jews, without a home or a refuge, harassed and persecuted beyond measure, and often done to death, have preserved their identity and held together for over 2000 years.

The Jews expected a messiah, and perhaps they had hopes of Jesus. But they were soon disappointed. Jesus talked a strange language of revolt against existing conditions and the social order. In particular he was against the rich and the hypocrites who made of religion a matter of certain observances and ceremonial. Instead of promising wealth and glory, he asked people to give up even what they had for a vague and mythical Kingdom of Heaven. He talked in stories and parables, but it is clear that he was a born rebel who could not tolerate existing conditions and was out to change them. This was not what the Jews wanted, and so most of them turned against him and handed him over to the Roman authorities.

The Roman people were not intolerant so far as religions went, for the Empire tolerated all religions, and even if someone chose to blaspheme or curse any of the gods, he was not punished. As one of the emperors, Tiberius, said: "If the gods are insulted, let them see to it themselves." The Roman governor, Pontius Pilate, before whom Jesus was produced, could not therefore have worried about the religious aspect of the matter. Jesus was looked upon as a political, and by the Jews as a social, rebel; and as such he was tried and sentenced and crucified at Golgotha. In the hour of his agony even his chosen disciples deserted him and denied him, and by their betrayal made his suffering almost unbearable,

so that, before he died, he uttered those strangely moving words: "My God! My God! why hast thou forsaken me?"

Jesus was quite young, being only a little over thirty when he died. We read in the beautiful language of the Gospels the tragic story of his death, and are moved. The growth of Christianity in after ages has made millions revere the name of Jesus, although they have seldom followed his teachings. But we must remember that when he was crucified, he was not widely known outside Palestine. The people in Rome knew nothing about him, and even Pontius Pilate must have attached little importance to the incident.

The immediate followers and disciples of Jesus were frightened into denying him, but soon after his death a newcomer, Paul,\* who had not seen Jesus himself, started spreading what he considered to be the Christian doctrine. Many people think that the Christianity that Paul preached was very different from the teachings of Jesus. Paul was an able and learned person, but he was not a social rebel such as Jesus was. Paul succeeded, however, and Christianity gradually spread. The Romans attached little importance to it to begin with. They thought Christians were a sect of the Jews. But the Christians became aggressive. They were hostile to all other religions and they refused absolutely to worship the Emperor's image. The Romans could not understand this mentality and, as it appeared to them, narrow-mindedness. They considered the Christians therefore as cranks who were pugnacious and uncultured and opposed to human progress. As a religion, they might have tolerated Christianity, but the Christian refusal to pay homage to the Emperor's image was looked upon as political treason and was made punishable with death. The Christians also strongly criticized the gladiatorial shows. Then followed the persecution of the Christians, and their property was confiscated and they were thrown to the lions. You must

\* St. Paul, whose name was Saul, a Jewish convert to Christianity, died around 67 A.D.

have read stories of these Christian martyrs. But when a person is prepared to die for a cause, and indeed to glory in such a death, it is impossible to suppress him or the cause he represents. And the Roman Empire wholly failed to suppress the Christians. Indeed, it was Christianity that came out triumphant in the conflict, and early in the fourth century after Christ one of the Roman emperors himself became a Christian, and Christianity became the official religion of the Empire. This was Constantine, who founded Constantinople.

As Christianity grew, violent disputes arose about the divinity of Jesus. You will remember my telling you how Gautama the Buddha, who claimed no divinity, came to be worshipped as a god and as an *avatar*. Similarly, Jesus claimed no divinity. His repeated statements that he was the son of God and the son of man do not necessarily mean any divine or superhuman claim. But human beings like to make gods of their great men, whom, having deified, they refrain from following! Six hundred years later the Prophet Mohammad started another great religion, but, profiting perhaps by these instances, he stated clearly and repeatedly that he was human, and not divine.

So, instead of understanding and following the teachings of Jesus, the Christians argued and quarrelled about the nature of Jesus' divinity and about the Trinity. They called each other heretics and persecuted each other and cut each other's heads off. There was a great and violent controversy at one time among different Christian sects over a certain diphthong. One party said that the word *Homo-ousion* should be used in a prayer; the other wanted *Homoi-ousion*—this difference had reference to the divinity of Jesus. Over this diphthong fierce war was waged and large numbers of people were slaughtered.

These internal disputes took place as the Church grew in power. They have continued between various Christian sects till quite recent times in the West.

You may be surprised to learn that Christianity came to India long before it went to England or western Europe, and when even in Rome it was a despised and proscribed sect. Within a hundred years or so of the death of Jesus, Christian missionaries came to South India by sea. They were received courteously and permitted to preach their new faith. They converted a large number of people, and their descendants have lived there, with varying fortunes, to this day. Most of them belong to old Christian sects which have ceased to exist in Europe. Some of these have their headquarters now in Asia Minor.

Christianity is politically the dominant religion to-day, because it is the religion of the dominant peoples of Europe. But it is strange to think of the rebel Jesus preaching non-violence and *ahimsa* and a revolt against the social order, and then to compare him with his loud-voiced followers of to-day, with their armaments and wars and worship of wealth. The Sermon on the Mount and modern European and American Christianity—how amazingly dissimilar they are! It is not surprising that many people should think that Bapu [Gandhi] is far nearer to Christ's teaching than most of his so-called followers in the West to-day.

## 7. THE ROMAN EMPIRE

Rome was called Mistress of the World, and people in the West thought that the whole world was overshadowed by Rome. This was of course incorrect and only displayed ignorance of geography and history. The Roman Empire was largely a Mediterranean empire and never went beyond Mesopotamia in the east. There were bigger and more powerful and more cultured States in China and India from time

to time. None the less, so far as the western world was concerned, Rome was the sole empire, and as such represented a kind of world-empire to the ancients. It had tremendous prestige.

The most wonderful thing about Rome is this idea behind it—the idea of world-dominion, of the headship of the world. Even when Rome fell, this idea protected it and gave it strength. And the idea persisted even when it was cut off completely from Rome itself. So much so that the Empire itself vanished and became a phantom, but the idea remained.

I find it a little difficult to write of Rome and of its successors. My mind is, I am afraid, a bit of a jumble of ill-assorted pictures gathered from old books that I have read, largely in prison. Indeed, one of the famous books on Roman history I would probably not have read if I had not come to prison. The book is so big that it is difficult to find time, in the midst of other activities, to read it right through. It is called *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, and is by an Englishman named [Edward] Gibbon. It was written quite a long time ago \* on the shores of Lac Lemman in Switzerland, but it makes fascinating reading even now, and I found its story, given in somewhat pompous but melodious language, more engrossing than any novel. I read it in Lucknow District Gaol, and for over a month I lived with Gibbon for a close companion, wrapped up in the images of the past that his language evoked. I was suddenly discharged before I had quite finished the book. The charm was broken, and I found some difficulty in finding the time and the mood to go back to ancient Rome and Constantinople and read the hundred or so pages that remained.

The Empire begins with Augustus Cæsar on the eve of the Christian era. For a little while the Emperors pay deference to the Senate, but almost the last traces of the Republic disappear soon enough, and the Emperor becomes all-power-

\* The first volume was published in 1776.

ful, a wholly autocratic monarch—indeed, almost a god. During his lifetime he is worshipped as semi-divine. After his death he becomes a full god. All the writers of the day endow most of the early Emperors with every virtue—especially Augustus. They call it the Golden Age, the Age of Augustus, when every virtue flourished and the good were rewarded and the wicked punished. That is the way writers have in despotic countries, where it is obvious that the praise of the ruler pays. Some of the most famous of Latin authors—Virgil, Ovid, Horace—whose books we had to read at school, lived about this time. It is possible that after the civil wars and troubles which took place continually during the latter days of the Republic, it was a great relief to have a period of peace and respite when trade and some measure of civilization could flourish.

But what was this civilization? It was a rich man's civilization, and these rich were not even like the artistic and keen-witted rich of ancient Greece, but a rather commonplace and dull crowd, whose chief job was to enjoy themselves. From all over the world foods and articles of luxury came for them, and there was great magnificence and show. The tribe of such people is not extinct even yet. There was pomp and show and a succession of gorgeous processions and games in the circus and gladiators done to death. But behind this pomp was the misery of the masses. There was heavy taxation which fell on the common people chiefly, and the burden of work fell on the innumerable slaves. Even their doctoring and philosophizing and thinking the great ones of Rome left largely to Greek slaves! There was exceedingly little attempt to educate or to find out facts about the world of which they called themselves the masters.

Emperor followed emperor, and some were bad and some were very bad. And gradually the army became all-powerful and could make and unmake emperors. So it came about that there was bidding to gain the favour of the army and money

was squeezed from the masses or from conquered territories to bribe the army. One of the great sources of revenue was the slave-trade, and there were regular organized slave-hunts by Roman armies in the East. Slave merchants accompanied the armies to buy up the slaves on the spot. The island of Delos, sacred to the old Greeks, became a great slave-market, where sometimes as many as 10,000 slaves were sold in a day! In the great Colosseum of Rome, a popular emperor used to display as many as 1,200 gladiators at a time—slaves who were to die to provide sport for the emperor and his people.

Such was Roman civilization in the days of the Empire. And yet our friend Gibbon writes that: "If a man were called upon to fix the period in the history of the world when the human race was most happy and prosperous, he would, without hesitation, name that which elapsed from the death of Domitian to the accession of Commodus"—this means the eighty-four years from 96 A.C. to 180 A.C. I am afraid Gibbon, with all his learning, has said something with which most people will certainly hesitate to agree. He talks of the human race, meaning thereby the Mediterranean world chiefly, for he could have had little or no knowledge of India or China or ancient Egypt.

## 8. THE IDEA OF THE WORLD STATE

The [Roman] Empire was supposed to be one great State ruling the world. There never has been an empire or State which has ruled the whole world, but, owing to ignorance of geography, and the great difficulty of transportation and travelling across long distances, people often thought in olden times that such a State did exist. Thus, in Europe and round the Mediterranean the Roman State even before it be-



came an empire was looked up to as a kind of super-State to which all the others were subordinate. So great was its prestige that some countries, like Pergamum, the Greek State in Asia Minor, and Egypt were actually presented to the Roman people by their rulers. They felt that Rome was all-powerful and irresistible. And yet, as I have told you, whether as a republic or as an empire, Rome never ruled over much more than the Mediterranean countries. The "barbarians" of the north of Europe would not submit to it, and it did not care much about them. But whatever the extent of Rome's authority might have been, it had the idea of a World-State behind it, and this idea was accepted by most people of the day in the West. It was because of this that the Roman Empires survived for so long, and their name and prestige were great even when there was no substance behind them.

This idea of one great State dominating over the rest of the world was not peculiar to Rome. We find it in China and India in the old days. As you know, the Chinese State was often a vaster one than the Roman Empire, extending right up to the Caspian Sea. The Chinese Emperor, "the son of Heaven" as he was called, was considered by the Chinese as the Universal Sovereign. It is true there were tribes and people who gave trouble and who did not obey the Emperor. But they were the "barbarians," just as the Romans called the north Europeans "barbarians."

In the same way in India from the earliest days you find references to these so-called universal sovereigns—*Chakravarti Rajas*. Their idea of the world was very limited, of course. India itself was so enormous that it seemed the world to them, and the overlordship of India appeared to them to be the overlordship of the world. The others outside were the "barbarians," the *mlechchhas*. The mythical Bharat who has given his name to our country—Bharatvarsha—is supposed by tradition to have been such a *chakravarti* sovereign. Yudhishtira and his brothers fought, according to the *Mahabharata*, for

this world-sovereignty. The *ashwamedha*—the great horse-sacrifice—was a challenge and symbol of world-dominion. Ashoka probably aimed at it before, overcome by remorse, he stopped all fighting. Later on you will see other imperialist sovereigns of India, like the Guptas, who also aimed at this.

You will thus see that in the old days people often thought in terms of universal sovereigns and World-States. Long afterwards came nationalism and a new kind of imperialism, and between the two they have played sufficient havoc in this world. Again there is talk to-day of a World-State, not a great empire, or a universal sovereign, but a kind of World-Republic which would prevent the exploitation of one nation or people or class by another. Whether or not anything like this will take place in the near future, it is difficult to say. But the world is in a bad way, and there seems to be no other way to get rid of its illness.

The British Empire is often compared with the Roman Empire—usually by the English, to their own great satisfaction. All empires are more or less similar. They fatten on the exploitation of the many. But there is one other strong resemblance between the Romans and the English people—they are both singularly devoid of imagination!

## 9. THE FALL OF ROME

The fall of Rome in Europe was a mighty thing. It was not merely the fall of a city or the fall of an empire. In a way the Roman Empire continued at Constantinople for long afterwards, and the ghost of the Empire hovered all over Europe for fourteen hundred years or so. But the fall of Rome was the end of a great period. It was the end of the ancient world of Greece and Rome. A new world, a new

culture and civilization were rising in the West on the ruins of Rome. We are misled by words and phrases, and because we find the same words used, we are apt to think that they mean the same thing. After Rome fell, western Europe continued to talk in the language of Rome, but behind that language were different ideas and different meanings. People say that the countries of Europe to-day are the children of Greece and Rome. And this is true to some extent, but still it is a misleading statement. For the countries of Europe represent something quite different from what Greece and Rome stood for. The old world of Rome and Greece collapsed almost completely. The civilization that had been built up in one thousand years or more ran to seed and decayed. It was then that the semi-civilized, half-barbarous countries of western Europe appear on the page of history and build up slowly a new culture and civilization. They learned much from Rome; they borrowed from the old world. But the process of learning was difficult and laborious. For hundreds of years culture and civilization seemed to have gone to sleep in Europe. There was the darkness of ignorance and bigotry. These centuries have therefore been called the Dark Ages.

Why was this so? Why should the world go back; and why should the knowledge accumulated through hundreds of years of labour disappear, or be forgotten? These are big questions, which trouble the wisest of us. I shall not attempt to answer them. Is it not strange that India, which was great in thought and action, should fall so miserably and for long periods should remain a slave country? Or China, with her splendid past, be a prey to interminable fighting? Perhaps the knowledge and the wisdom of the ages, which man has gathered together bit by bit, do not disappear. But somehow our eyes close and we cannot see at times. The window is shut and there is darkness. But outside and all around is the light, and if we keep our eyes or our windows shut, it does not mean that the light has disappeared.

Some people say that the Dark Ages in Europe were due to Christianity—not the religion of Jesus, but the official Christianity which flourished in the West after Constantine, the Roman Emperor, adopted it. Indeed, these people say that the adoption of Christianity by Constantine in the fourth century “inaugurated a millennium” (that is, one thousand years) “in which reason was enchained, thought was enslaved, and knowledge made no progress.” Not only did it bring persecution and bigotry and intolerance, but it made it difficult for people to make progress in science and in most other ways. Sacred books often become obstacles to progress. They tell us what the world was like at the time that they were written; they tell us the ideas of that period, and its customs. No one dare challenge those ideas or those customs because they are written in a “sacred” book. So, although the world may change tremendously, we are not allowed to change our ideas and customs to fit in with the changed conditions. The result is that we become misfits, and of course there is trouble.

Some people therefore accuse Christianity of having brought this period of darkness over Europe. Others tell us that it was Christianity and Christian monks and priests who kept the lamp of learning alight during the Dark Ages. They kept up art and painting, and valuable books were carefully preserved and copied by them.

Thus do people argue. Perhaps both are right. But it would be ridiculous to say that Christianity is responsible for all the evils that followed the fall of Rome. Indeed, Rome fell because of these evils.

## 10. THE RISE OF BYZANTINE CIVILIZATION

So we find darkness in Europe. The Dark Ages begin and life becomes rude and crude, and there is almost no education, and fighting seems to be the only occupation or amusement. The days of Socrates and Plato seem very far off indeed.

So much for the West. Let us look at the Eastern Empire also. Constantine made Christianity the official religion. One of his successors, the Emperor Julian, refused to accept Christianity. He wanted to go back to the worship of the old gods and goddesses. But he could not succeed, for the old gods had had their day, and Christianity was too powerful for them. Julian was called Julian the Apostate by the Christians, and that is the title by which he is known in history.\*

Soon after Julian came another Emperor who was very unlike him. His name was Theodosius, and he is called the Great, I suppose because he was great in destroying the old temples and the old statues of the gods and goddesses. He was not only strongly opposed to those who were not Christians: he was equally aggressive against Christians who were not orthodox according to his way of thinking. He would tolerate no opinion or religion of which he did not approve. Theodosius for a short while joined the Eastern and Western Empires and was Emperor of both. This was in 392 A.C., before the barbarian invasions of Rome.

Christianity continued to spread. Its struggles now were not against non-Christians. All the fighting was done by Christian

\* Flavius Claudius Julianus, nephew of Constantine, was born in 331, became Emperor in 361, and died in 363.

sects against each other, and the amount of intolerance shown by them is amazing. All over northern Africa and western Asia, as well as in Europe, there were many battle-grounds where Christians sought to convince their brother-Christians of the true faith by means of blows and cudgels and such-like gentle measures of persuasion.

From 527 to 565 A.C. Justinian was Emperor at Constantinople. He turned out the Goths from Italy, and for some time Italy and Sicily were parts of the Eastern Empire. Later the Goths recovered Italy.

Justinian built the beautiful cathedral of Sancta Sophia in Constantinople, which is still one of the finest of Byzantine churches. He also had all the existing laws brought together and arranged by able lawyers. Long before I knew anything of the Eastern Roman Empire and its emperors, I knew of Justinian's name from this law-book, which is called the *Institutes of Justinian*, and which I had to read.\* But although Justinian founded a university at Constantinople, he closed the academy or the old schools of philosophy of Athens which had been founded by Plato and had lasted a thousand years. Philosophy is a dangerous thing for any dogmatic religion; it makes people think.

And so we have arrived at the sixth century. We see Rome and Constantinople gradually drifting father apart; Rome taken possession of by the Germanic tribes of the north; Constantinople becoming the centre of a Greek empire, although it was called Roman; Rome going to pieces and sinking to the low level of civilization of its conquerors, whom it used to call the "barbarians" in the days of its glory; Constantinople carrying on the old tradition in a way, but also going down in the scale of civilization; Christian sects

\* The *Codex Justinianus* was published in 529; the *Digest* or *Pandects*, of legal opinions, in 533; Justinian's own laws, *Novellae*, in 565. The general textbook of the laws is known as the *Institutes*. Justinian, born in 483, died in 565.

fighting each other for mastery; and Eastern Christianity, which had spread right up to Turkestan and China and Abyssinia, becoming cut off from both Constantinople and Rome. The Dark Ages commence. Learning, so far, was classical learning—that is, Greek or old Latin, which derived its inspiration from Greek. But these old Greek books dealing with gods and goddesses and with philosophies were not considered to be fit literature for the pious and devout and intolerant Christians of those early days. So they were not encouraged, and learning suffered, as did also many forms of art.

But Christianity did something also to preserve learning and art. Monasteries like the Buddhist *sangha* were founded and spread rapidly. In these monasteries sometimes the old learning found a home. And here also the beginnings of a new art were laid down which was to blossom forth in all its beauty many centuries later. These monks just managed to keep the lamp of learning and art burning dimly. It was a service they rendered by preventing it from going out. But the light was confined to a narrow place; outside there was general darkness.

In these early days of Christianity there was another strange tendency. Many people, fired by religious zeal, retired into the deserts and solitary places, far from the haunts of man, and lived in a wild state there. They tortured themselves and did not wash at all, and generally tried to bear as much pain as possible. This was especially so in Egypt, where many such hermits lived in the desert. Their idea seems to have been that the more they suffered and the less they washed the holier they became. One of these hermits sat on the top of a column for many years! These hermits gradually ceased to exist, but for a long time many devout Christians believed that to enjoy anything was almost a sin. This idea of suffering coloured the Christian mentality.

In India we see sometimes even to-day people behaving to some extent as the Christian hermits did in Egypt. They

hold up one arm till it dries up and atrophies, or sit on spikes, or do many other absurd and foolish things. Some do it, I suppose, just to impose on ignorant people and get money out of them, others perhaps because they feel that they become more holy thereby! As if it can ever be desirable to make your body unfit for any decent activity.

I am reminded of a story of Buddha, for which again I go to our old friend Hiuen Tsang. A young disciple of his was doing penance. Buddha asked him: "You, dear youth, when living as a layman, did you know how to play the lute?" He said: "I knew." "Well, then," said Buddha, "I will draw a comparison derived from this. The cords being too tight, then the sounds were not in cadence; when they were too loose, then the sounds had neither harmony nor charm; but when not tight and not slack, then the sounds were harmonious. So also," Buddha continued, "in regard to the body. If it is harshly treated, it becomes wearied and the mind is listless; if it is too softly treated, then the feelings are pampered and the will is weakened."

## 11. THE COMING OF ISLAM

Arabia is a desert country, and deserts and mountains breed hard people who love their freedom and are not easily subdued. It was not a rich country and there was little in it to attract foreign conquerors. There were just two little towns—Mecca and Yethrib by the sea. For the rest there were dwellings in the desert, and the people of the country were largely Bedouins or Baddus—the "dwellers of the desert." Their constant companions were their swift camels and their beautiful horses, and even the ass was a faithful friend valued for its remarkable powers of endurance. To be com-



pared to the donkey or the ass was a compliment, and not a term of reproach, as in other countries. For life is hard in a desert country, and strength and endurance are even more precious qualities there than elsewhere.

They were proud and sensitive, these men of the desert, and quarrelsome. They lived in their clans and their families and quarrelled with other clans and families. Once a year they made peace with each other and journeyed to Mecca on pilgrimage to their many gods whose images were kept there. Above all, they worshipped a huge black stone—the Kaaba.

It was a nomadic and patriarchal life—the kind of life led by the primitive tribes in Central Asia or elsewhere, before they settled down to city life and civilization. The great empires which rose up round Arabia often included Arabia in their dominions, but this was more nominal than real. It was no easy matter to subdue or govern nomadic desert tribes.

Once a little Arab State rose in Palmyra in Syria, and it had its brief period of glory in the third century after Christ. But even this was outside Arabia proper. So the Bedouins lived their desert lives, generation after generation, and Arab ships went out to trade, and Arabia went on with little change. Some people became Christians and some became Jews but mostly they remained worshippers of the 360 idols and the Black Stone in Mecca.

It is strange that this Arab race, which for long ages had lived a sleepy existence, apparently cut off from what was happening elsewhere, should suddenly wake up and show such tremendous energy as to startle and upset the world. The story of the Arabs, and of how they spread rapidly over Asia, Europe and Africa, and of the high culture and civilization which they developed, is one of the wonders of history.

Islam was the new force or idea which woke up the Arabs and filled them with self-confidence and energy. This was a religion started by a new prophet, Mohammad, who was born in Mecca in 570 A.C. He was in no hurry to start this

religion. He lived a quiet life, liked and trusted by his fellow-citizens. Indeed, he was known as "Al-Amin"—the Trusty. But when he started preaching his new religion, and especially when he preached against the idols at Mecca, there was a loud outcry against him, and ultimately he was driven out of Mecca, barely escaping with his life. Above all he laid stress on the claim that there was only one God, and that he, Mohammad, was the Prophet of God.

Driven away by his own people from Mecca, he sought refuge with some friends and helpers in Yethrib. This flight from Mecca is called the *Hijrat* in Arabic, and the Muslim calendar begins from this date—622 A.C. This Hegira calendar is a lunar calendar—that is, it is calculated according to the moon. It is therefore five or six days shorter than the solar year which we usually observe, and the Hegira months do not stick to the same seasons of the year. Thus the same month may be in winter this year and in the middle of summer after some years.

Islam may be said to begin with the flight—the *Hijrat*—in 622 A.C., although in a sense it had begun a little earlier. The city of Yethrib welcomed Mohammad and, in honour of his coming the name of the city itself was changed to "Madinat-un-Nabi"—the city of the Prophet—or, just shortly, Madina, or Medina, as it is known now. The people of Medina who helped Mohammad were called *Ansar*—the helpers. Descendants of these "helpers" were proud of this title, and even to this day they use it.

Within seven years of the flight, Mohammad returned to Mecca as its master. Even before this he sent out from Medina a summons to the kings and rulers of the world to acknowledge the one God and his Prophet. Heraclius, the Constantinople Emperor, got it while he was still engaged in his campaign against the Persians in Syria; the Persian King got it; and it is said that even Tai-Tsung got it in China. They must have wondered, these kings and rulers, who this un-

known person was who dared to command them! From the sending of these messages we can form some idea of the supreme confidence in himself and his mission which Mohammed must have had. And this confidence and faith he managed to give to his people, and with this to inspire and console them, this desert people of no great consequence managed to conquer half the known world.

Confidence and faith in themselves were a great thing. Islam also gave them a message of brotherhood—of the equality of all those who were Muslims. A measure of democracy was thus placed before the people. Compared to the corrupt Christianity of the day, this message of brotherhood must have had a great appeal, not only for the Arabs, but also for the inhabitants of many countries where they went.

Wealth and empire brought luxury and the games and arts of luxury. Horse-racing was a favourite amusement of the Arabs, so also were polo and hunting and chess. There was quite a fashionable craze for music and especially for singing, and the capital was full of singers with their trains and hangers-on.

Another great but very unfortunate change gradually took place. This was in the position of women. Among the Arabs women did not observe any *purdah*. They were not secluded and hidden away. They moved about in public, went to mosques and lectures, and even delivered lectures. But success made the Arabs imitate more and more the customs of the two old empires on either side of them—the Eastern Roman and the Persian. They had defeated the former and put an end to the latter, but they themselves succumbed to many an evil habit of these empires. It is said that it was due especially to the influence of Constantinople and Persia that the seclusion of women began among the Arabs. Gradually the *harem* system begins, and men and women meet each other less and less socially. Unhappily this seclusion of women became a feature of Islamic society, and India also learnt it

from them when the Muslims came here. It amazes me to think that some people put up with this barbarity still. Whenever I think of the women in *purdah*, cut off from the outside world, I invariably think of a prison or a zoo! How can a nation go ahead if half of its population is kept hidden away in a kind of prison?

Fortunately, India is rapidly tearing the *purdah* away. Even Muslim society has largely rid itself of this terrible burden. In Turkey, Kamal Pasha has put an end to it completely, and in Egypt it is going fast.

One thing more. The Arabs, especially at the beginning of their awakening, were full of enthusiasm for their faith. Yet they were a tolerant people and there are numerous instances of this toleration in religion. In Jerusalem the Khalifa Omar made a point of it. In Spain there was a large Christian population which had the fullest liberty of conscience. In India the Arabs never ruled except in Sindh, but there were frequent contacts, and the relations were friendly. Indeed, the most noticeable thing about this period of history is the contrast between the toleration of the Muslim Arab and the intolerance of the Christian in Europe.

## 12. FEUDALISM AND THE DENIAL OF FREEDOM

We think of different nations, of Englishmen and Frenchmen and Germans, and each one of these thinks of his country as his motherland or fatherland or *patrie*. This is the feeling of nationality which is so obvious in the world to-day. But this idea of nationality did not exist in those days. There was some idea of Christendom, of belonging to a group

or society of Christians as against the heathen or Muslims. In the same way the Muslims had the idea of belonging to the world of Islam as against all others who were unbelievers.

But these ideas of Christendom and Islam were vague notions which did not touch the daily life of the people. Only on special occasions were they worked up to fill the people with religious zeal to fight for Christianity or Islam, as the case might be. Instead of nationality there was a peculiar relation between man and man. This was the feudal relation arising out of what is known as the Feudal System. After the downfall of Rome the old order in the West had collapsed. There was disorder and anarchy and violence and force everywhere. The strong seized what they could and held on to it as long as a stronger person did not come to throw them out. Strong castles were built and the lords of these castles went out with raiding-parties and harried the countryside, and sometimes fought others like themselves. The poor peasants and workers on the land of course suffered the most. Out of this disorder grew up the feudal system.

The peasants were not organized, and could not defend themselves against these robber-barons. There was no central government strong enough to protect them. So they made the best of a bad job and came to terms with the lord of the castle who plundered them. They agreed to give him part of what they produced in their fields and also to serve him in some ways, provided that he would not plunder and harass them and would protect them from others of his kind. The lord of the small castle in the same way came to terms with the lord of the bigger castle. But the little lord could not give the big lord the produce of the field, as he was not a peasant or a producer. So he promised to give him military service—that is, to fight for him whenever need arose. In return the big one was to protect the little one, and the latter was the vassal of the lord. And so, step by step, they went up to yet bigger lords and nobles, till at last they arrived at the king

at the top of this feudal structure. But they did not stop even there. To them even heaven had its own bit of the feudal system with its Trinity, presided over by God!

This was the system that grew up gradually out of the disorder that prevailed in Europe. You must remember that there was practically no central government at the time; there were no policemen or the like. The owner of a piece of land was the governor and lord of it as well as of all the people who lived upon it. He was a kind of little king and was supposed to protect them in return for their service and part of the produce of their fields. He was the liege-lord of these people, who were called villeins or serfs. In theory, he held his land from his superior lord, whose vassal he was and to whom he gave military service.

Even the officials of the Church were parts of the feudal system. They were both priests and feudal lords. Thus, in Germany nearly half the land and wealth was in the hands of the bishops and abbots. The Pope was himself a feudal lord.

This whole system, you will notice, was one of gradations and classes. There was no question of equality. At the bottom were the villeins or serfs, and they had to carry the whole weight of the social structure—the little lords and the big lords, and the bigger lords and the king. And the whole cost of the Church—of the bishops and abbots and cardinals and ordinary priests—fell on them also. The lords, little or big, did not do any work which might produce food or any other kind of wealth. This was considered beneath them. Fighting was their chief occupation, and when not engaged in this, they hunted or indulged in mock-fights and tournaments. They were a rough and illiterate lot who did not know many ways of amusing themselves besides fighting and eating and drinking. Thus the whole burden of producing the food and the other necessities of life fell on the peasants and the artisans. At the top of the whole system was the king, who was supposed to be a kind of vassal of God.

This was the idea behind this feudal system. In theory the lords were bound to protect their vassals and serfs, but in practice they were a law unto themselves. Their superiors or the king seldom checked them, and the peasantry were too weak to resist their demands. Being far the stronger, they took from their serfs the utmost they could and left them barely enough to carry on a miserable existence. That has been the way of owners of land always and in every country. The ownership of land has given nobility. The robber knight who seized land and built a castle became a noble lord respected by everybody. This ownership has also given power, and the owner has used this power to take away as much from the peasant and the producer or the worker as he could. Even the laws have helped the owners of land, for the laws have been made by them and their friends. And this is the reason why many people think that land should not belong to individuals, but to the community. If it belongs to the State or community, that means that it belongs to all who live there, and no one can then exploit others on it, or get an unfair advantage.

But these ideas were yet to come. During the time of which we are speaking people did not think along these lines. The masses of the people were miserable, but they saw no way out of their difficulties. They put up with them, therefore, and carried on their life of hopeless labour. The habit of obedience had been dinned into them, and once this is done, people will put up with almost anything. So we find a society growing up consisting of the feudal lords and their retainers on the one side and the very poor on the other. Round the stone castle of the lord would cluster the mud or wooden huts of the serfs. There were two worlds, far removed from each other—the world of the lord, and the world of the serf; and the lord probably considered the serf as only some degrees removed from the cattle he tended.

Sometimes the smaller priests tried to protect the serfs

from their lords. But as a rule the priests and clergy sided with the lords, and as a matter of fact the bishops and abbots were themselves feudal lords.

In India we have not had this kind of feudal system, but we have had something similar to it. The Indian caste system, though wholly different from the feudal system, yet divided society into classes. In China there has never been any autocracy or privileged class of this kind. By their ancient system of examinations they opened the gate to the highest office to each individual. But of course in practice there may have been many restrictions.

In the feudal system there was thus no idea of equality or of freedom. There was an idea of rights and obligations—that is, a feudal lord received as his right service and part of the produce of the land; and considered it as his obligation to give protection. But rights are always remembered and obligations are often ignored. We have even now great land-owners in some European countries and in India who take enormous sums as rent from their tenants, without doing a scrap of work, but all idea of any obligation has long been forgotten.

It is strange to notice how the old barbarian tribes of Europe who were so fond of their freedom gradually resigned themselves to this feudal system which denied it completely. These tribes used to elect their chiefs and to hold them in check. Now we find despotism and autocracy everywhere and no question of election. I cannot say why this change occurred. It may be that the doctrines spread by the Church helped the spread of undemocratic ideas. The king became the shadow of God on earth, and how can you disobey or argue with even the shadow of the Almighty? The feudal system seemed to include heaven and earth in its fold.

Some freedom slowly came to Europe again through the new forms that were rising up. Besides the owners of land and those who worked on it, the lords and their serfs, there



were other classes of people—artisans and traders. These people, as such, were not part of the feudal system. In the period of disorder there was little enough trade, and handicrafts did not flourish. But gradually trade increased and the importance of mastercraftsmen and merchants grew. They became wealthy, and the lords and barons went to them to borrow money. They lent the money, but they insisted on the lords allowing them certain privileges. These privileges added to their strength. So we find now, instead of the serfs' huts clustering round the lord's castle, little towns growing up with houses all round a cathedral or church or guild-hall. The merchants and artisans formed guilds or associations, and the headquarters of these associations became the guild-halls which later became the town-halls.

### 13. ASIA AND EUROPE 1,000 YEARS AGO

We have finished our brief survey of the world—of Asia and Europe and a bit of Africa—at the end of one thousand years after Christ. But look again.

Asia. The old civilizations of India and China still continue and flourish. Indian culture spreads to Malaysia and Cambodia and brings rich fruit there. Chinese culture spreads to Korea and Japan and, to some extent, Malaysia. In western Asia, Arabian culture prevails in Arabia, Palestine, Syria and Mesopotamia; in Persia or Iran, there is a mixture of the old Iranian and the newer Arabian civilization. Some of the countries of Central Asia have also imbibed this mixed Iranian-Arabian civilization, and have also been influenced by India and China. In all these countries there is a high level

civilization; trade and learning and the arts flourish; great cities abound; and famous universities attract students from afar. Only in Mongolia and in some parts of Central Asia, as well as in Siberia in the north, is the level of civilization low.

Europe now. It is backward and semi-barbarous compared to the progressive countries of Asia. The old Græco-Roman civilization is just a memory of the distant past. Learning is at a discount; the arts are not much in evidence; and trade is far less than in Asia. There are two bright spots. Spain, under the Arabs, carries on the traditions of the great days of the Arabs, and Constantinople, even in her slow decay, is a great and populous city, sitting on the border, between Asia and Europe. Over the greater part of Europe there is frequent disorder and, under the feudal system which prevails, each knight and lord is a little king in his domain. Rome, the imperial capital of old, at one time had been hardly bigger than a village, and wild animals had lived in its old Colosseum. But it is growing again.

So if you compared the two, Asia and Europe, one thousand years after Christ, the comparison would have been greatly to the advantage of Asia.

Let us have another look and try to see below the surface of things. We find that all is not so well with Asia as a superficial observer might imagine. India and China, the two cradles of ancient civilization, are in trouble. Their troubles are not merely those of invasion from outside, but the more real troubles which sap away the inner life and strength. The Arabs in the west have come to the end of their great days. It is true that the Seljuqs rise to power, but their rise is simply due to their fighting qualities. They do not, like the Indians or Chinese or Persians or Arabs, represent the culture of Asia, but the fighting quality of Asia. Everywhere in Asia the old cultured races seem to be shrinking. They have lost confidence in themselves and are on the defensive.

New peoples arise, strong and full of energy, who conquer these old races in Asia, and even threaten Europe. But they do not bring a new wave of civilization with them or a new impetus for culture. The old races slowly civilize them and assimilate their conquerors.

So we see a great change coming over Asia. While the old civilizations continue and the fine arts flourish and there are refinements in luxury, the pulse of civilization weakens, and the breath of life seems to grow less and less. For long they are to continue. There is no definite break or end to them, except in Arabia and Central Asia when the Mongols come. In China and India there is a slow fading off, till the old civilization becomes like a painted picture, beautiful to look at from a distance, but lifeless; and if you come near it, you see that the white ants have been at it.

Civilizations, like empires, fall, not so much because of the strength of the enemy outside, as through the weakness and decay within. Rome fell not because of the barbarians; they merely knocked down something that was already dead. The heart of Rome had ceased beating when the arms and legs were cut off. We see something of this process in India and China and in the case of the Arabs. The collapse of Arabian civilization was sudden, even as their rise had been. In India and China the process is long-drawn-out and it is not easy to spot it.

Long before Mahmud of Ghazni came to India this process had started. We can see the change in the minds of the people. Instead of creating new ideas and things, the people of India busied themselves with repetition and imitation of what had been done. Their minds were keen enough still, but they busied themselves in interpreting and explaining what had been said and written long ago. They still produced wonderful sculpture and carvings, but they were heavy with too much detail and ornament, and often almost a touch of the grotesque crept in. Originality was absent and so was bold and

noble design. The polished graces and arts and luxury continued among the rich and the well-to-do, but little was done to relieve the toil and misery of the people as a whole or to increase production.

All these are the signs of the evening of a civilization. When this takes place you may be sure that the life of that civilization is vanishing; for creation is the sign of life, not repetition and imitation.

Some such processes are in evidence in China and India then. But do not mistake me. I do not mean that China or India cease to be because of this or relapse into barbarism. I mean that the old urge of the creative spirit that China and India had received in the past was exhausting its energy and not renewing itself. It was not adapting itself to changed surroundings; it was merely carrying on. This happens with every country and civilization. There are periods of great creative effort and growth and periods of exhaustion. It is amazing that in India and China the exhaustion came so late, and, even so, it has never been complete.

Islam brought a new impulse for human progress to India. To some extent it served as a tonic. It shook up India. But it did less good than it might have done because of two reasons. It came in the wrong way, and it came rather late. For hundreds of years before Mahmud of Ghazni raided India, Muslim missionaries had wandered about India and had been welcomed. They came in peace and had some success. There was little, if any, ill-feeling against Islam. Then came Mahmud with fire and sword, and the manner of his coming as a conqueror and a plunderer and killer injured the reputation of Islam in India more than anything else. He was, of course, just like any other great conqueror, killing and plundering, and caring little for religion. But for a very long time his raids overshadowed Islam in India and made it difficult for people to consider it dispassionately, as they might otherwise have done.

This was one reason. The other was that it came late. It came about four hundred years after it began, and during this long period it had exhausted itself somewhat, and lost a great deal of its creative energy. If the Arabs had come to India with Islam in the early days, the rising Arabian culture would have mixed with the old Indian culture and the two would have acted and reacted on each other, with great consequences. It would have been the mixing of two cultured races; and the Arabs were well known for their toleration and rationalism in religion. At one period, indeed, there was a club in Baghdad, under the patronage of the Caliph, where men of all religions and no religion met together to discuss and debate about all matters from the point of view of rationalism alone.

But the Arabs did not come to India proper. They stopped in Sindh, and India was little influenced by them. Islam came to India through the Turks and others who did not have the tolerance or the culture of the Arab, and who were primarily soldiers.

Still, a new impulse came to India for progress and creative effort. How this put some new life in India and then worked itself out, we shall consider later.

Another result of the weakening of Indian civilization is now in evidence. Attacked from outside, it sought to defend itself against the incoming tide by building a shell round itself and almost imprisoning itself. This again was a sign of weakness and fear; and the remedy only increased the disease. The real disease was not foreign invasion, but stagnation. By this exclusiveness the stagnation grew and all avenues of growth were stopped. Later we shall see that China did this also in its own way, and so did Japan. It is a little dangerous to live in a society which is closed up like a shell. We petrify there and grow unaccustomed to fresh air and fresh ideas. Fresh air is as necessary for societies as for individuals.

So much for Asia. Europe, we saw, was backward and

quarrelsome at that time. But behind all this disorder and uncouthness you can detect energy at least and life. Asia, after her long dominance, was on the down-grade; Europe was struggling up. But she had still far to go before she could come up anywhere near Asia's level.

To-day you will find a new energy in Asia, a new creative spirit, and a new life. Asia is up again, there can be no doubt. And Europe, or rather western Europe, in spite of her greatness, shows some signs of decay.

## 14. THE RISE OF EUROPEAN CITIES

The period of the Crusades was the great period of faith in Europe, of common aspiration and belief, and the people sought relief from their daily misery in this faith and hope. There was no science; there was very little learning; for faith and science and learning do not easily go together. Learning and knowledge make people think, and doubt and questioning are difficult companions for faith to have. And the way of science is the way of inquiry and experiment, which is not the way of faith. We shall see later how this faith weakened and doubt arose.

But for the moment we see faith flourishing and the Roman Church putting itself at the head of the "faithful" and often exploiting them. Many, many thousands of the "faithful" were sent to the Crusades in Palestine, never to return. The Pope also began to declare crusades against Christian people or groups in Europe who did not obey him in everything. The Pope and the Church even took advantage of this faith by issuing, and often selling, "dispensations" and "indulgences." "Dispensations" were permissions to break some law or convention of the Church. Thus the very laws which the

Church made, it allowed to be set aside in special cases. Respect for such laws could hardly continue for long. "Indulgences" were even worse. According to the Roman Church, after death a soul goes to purgatory, which is a place somewhere between heaven and hell, and there it suffers for the sins committed in this world. Afterwards the soul is supposed to go to heaven. The Pope issued promises to people, for payment, that they would escape purgatory and go straight to heaven. Thus the faith of the simple was exploited by the Church, and even out of crimes and what it considered sins, it made money. This practice of selling "indulgences" grew up some time after the Crusades. It became a great scandal, and was one of the reasons why many people turned against the Church of Rome.

It is strange how much people with simple faith will put up with. It is because of this that religion has become one of the biggest and most paying businesses in many countries. See the priests in the temples, how they try to fleece the poor worshipper. Go to the banks of the Ganga, and you will see the *pandas* refusing to perform some ceremony till the unhappy villager pays up. Whatever happens in the family—a birth, a marriage, a death—the priest steps in and payment is required.

In every religion this is so—Hinduism, Christianity, Islam, Zoroastrianism. Each has its own methods of making money out of the faith of the faithful. In Hinduism the methods are obvious enough. In Islam there is supposed to be no priesthood, and in the past this helped a little in protecting its followers from religious exploitation. But individuals and classes arose, calling themselves specialists in religion, learned men, *maulavis* and *mullas* and the like, and they imposed upon the simple Muslims of faith and exploited them. Where a long beard, or a tuft of hair on the crown of the head, or a long mark on the forehead, or a fakir's dress, or a *sanyasin's* yellow

or ochre garb is a passport to holiness, it is not difficult to impose on the public.

If you go to America, most advanced of countries, you will find there also that religion is a big industry living on the exploitation of the people.

I have wandered far from the Middle Ages and the age of faith. We must go back to them. We find this faith taking visible and creative shape. In the eleventh and twelfth centuries there is a great building period and cathedrals spring up all over western Europe. A new architecture appears such as had not been seen in Europe before. By a clever device the weight and stress of the heavy roofs are distributed to great buttresses outside the building. Inside one is surprised to see delicate columns apparently supporting the massive weight on top. There is a pointed arch, taken from the Arab style of architecture. Above the whole building there is a spire climbing up to the sky. This was the Gothic style of architecture, which was evolved in Europe. It was wondrously beautiful, and it seemed to represent soaring faith and aspiration. Truly it represents that age of faith. Such buildings can only be built by architects and craftsmen in love with their work and co-operating together in a great undertaking.

This rise of the Gothic in western Europe is a surprising thing. Out of the welter of disorder and anarchy and ignorance and intolerance, grew up this thing of beauty, almost like a prayer going up to the heavens. In France, northern Italy, Germany and England, Gothic cathedrals grew up almost simultaneously. No one knows exactly how they began. No one knows the names of their architects. They seem to represent more the joint will and labour of the people as a whole than that of a single architect. Another new thing was the stained glass of the windows of the cathedrals. There were fine paintings in beautiful colours on these windows,



and the light that came through them added to the solemn and awe-inspiring effect created by the building.

I compared Europe with Asia. We saw that Asia was far more cultured and civilized than Europe at the time. And yet in India there was not much of creative work being done, and creation, I said, is the sign of life. This Gothic architecture coming out of semi-civilized Europe shows us that there was life enough there. In spite of the difficulties which disorder and a backward state of civilization present, this life breaks out and seeks methods of manifesting itself. The Gothic buildings were one of these manifestations. Later we shall see it coming out in painting and sculpture and the love of adventure.

During this great building period of the eleventh and twelfth centuries non-Gothic churches were also put up, like the great cathedral of Notre Dame in Paris, and probably St. Mark's in Venice. St. Mark's, which you have seen, is an example of Byzantine work and has beautiful mosaics.

The age of faith declined, and with it the building of churches and cathedrals. Men's thoughts turned in other directions, to their business and trade, to their civic life. Instead of cathedrals, city halls began to be built. So we find from the beginning of the fifteenth century beautiful Gothic town-halls or guild-halls scattered over northern and western Europe.

These great Gothic cathedrals that rose up in the eleventh and twelfth centuries were situated in the towns and cities. The old cities were waking up, and new towns were growing. There was a change all over Europe, and everywhere town life was increasing. In the old days of the Roman Empire there were, of course, great towns all round the Mediterranean coast. But with the fall of Rome and Græco-Roman civilization, these towns also decayed. Except for Constantinople there was hardly a big city in Europe, apart from Spain, where the Arabs were. In Asia—in India, China

and the Arabian world—great cities flourished at this time. But Europe did not have them. Cities and culture and civilization seem to go together, and Europe had none of these for a long time after the collapse of the Roman order.

But now again there was a revival of city life. In Italy especially these cities grew. They were a thorn in the side of the Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire, for they would not agree to the suppression of certain liberties they had. These cities in Italy and elsewhere represent the growth of the merchant classes and the *bourgeoisie* or middle classes.

These new cities, or most of them, must be distinguished from the old-style imperial cities. The importance of the rising cities of Europe was not due to any emperor or king, but to the trade that they controlled. Their strength lay therefore not in the nobles, but in the merchant classes. They were merchant cities. The rise of the cities therefore means the rise of the *bourgeoisie*. This *bourgeoisie*, we shall see later, went on increasing in power, till it successfully challenged king and noble and seized power from them. But this was to happen long after the period we are considering.

Cities and civilization often go together, I have just said. With the growth of cities learning also grows and the spirit of freedom. Men living in rural areas are scattered and are often very superstitious. They seem to be at the mercy of the elements. They have to work hard and have little leisure, and they dare not disobey their lords. In cities large numbers live together; they have the opportunity of living a more civilized life, of learning, of discussing and criticizing, and of thinking.

So the spirit of freedom grows both against political authority as represented by the feudal nobles, and against the spiritual authority as represented by the Church. The age of faith declines and doubt begins.

## 15. THE FIGHT FOR FREEDOM OF CONSCIENCE

The fight for religious freedom, which we see developing in Europe in the fourteenth century and after, and the fight for political freedom, which will come next, are really two aspects of the same struggle. This is the struggle against authority and authoritarianism. Both the Holy Roman Empire and the Papacy represented absolute authority, and they tried to crush the spirit of man. The Emperor was there by "divine right," even more so the Pope, and no one had the right to question this, or disobey the orders issued to him from above. Obedience was the great virtue. Even the exercise of private judgment was considered sinful. Thus the issue between blind obedience and freedom was quite clear. A great fight was waged in Europe for many centuries for freedom of conscience and, later, political freedom. After many ups and downs and great suffering, a measure of success was obtained. But just when people were congratulating themselves that the goal of freedom had been reached, they found that they were mistaken. There could be no real freedom without economic freedom, and so long as poverty remained. To call a starving man free is but to mock him. So the next step was the fight for economic freedom, and that fight is being waged to-day all over the world.

In India there was no such fight for freedom of conscience because from the earliest days this right never seems to have been denied. People could believe in almost anything they liked and there was no compulsion. The method of influencing the minds of people was by argument and debate, and not by the club and the stake. There may, of course, have

been compulsion or violence used occasionally, but the right of freedom of conscience was admitted in the old Aryan theory. The result of this was not wholly good, strange as this may seem. Being assured of a theoretical freedom, people were not vigilant enough about it, and gradually they got more and more entangled in the rites and ceremonials and superstitions of a degraded religion. They developed a religious ideology which took them back a long way and made them slaves to religious authority. That authority was not that of a Pope or other individual. It was the authority of the "sacred books" and customs and conventions. So while we talked of freedom of conscience and were proud to have it, we were really far from it, and were chained up by the ideas which had been impressed upon us by the old books and our customs. Authority and authoritarianism reigned over us and controlled our minds. The chains which sometimes tie up our bodies are bad enough; but the invisible chains consisting of ideas and prejudices which tie up our minds are far worse. They are of our own making, and though often we are not conscious of them, they hold us in their terrible grip.

The coming of the Muslims to India as invaders introduced an element of compulsion in religion. The fight was really a political one between conqueror and conquered, but it was coloured by the religious element, and there was, at times, religious persecution. But it would be wrong to imagine that Islam stood for such persecution. There is an interesting report of a speech delivered by a Spanish Muslim when he was driven out of Spain, together with the remaining Arabs, in 1610. He protested against the Inquisition and said: "Did our victorious ancestors ever once attempt to extirpate Christianity out of Spain, when it was in their power? Did they not suffer your forefathers to enjoy the free use of their rites at the same time as they wore their chains? . . . If there may have been some examples of forced conversions, they are so rare as scarce to deserve mentioning, and only at-

tempted by men who had not the fear of God and the Prophet before their eyes, and who in doing so, have acted directly and diametrically contrary to the holy precepts and ordinances of Islam, which cannot, without sacrilege, be violated by any who would be held worthy of the honourable epithet of Musalman. You can never produce, among us, any bloodthirsty formal tribunal, on account of different persuasions in points of faith, that any wise approaches your execrable Inquisition. Our arms, it is true, are ever open to receive all who are disposed to embrace our religion; but we are not allowed by our sacred Quran to tyrannize over consciences."

So religious toleration and freedom of conscience, which were such marked features of old Indian life, slipped away from us to some extent, while Europe caught up to us and then went ahead in establishing, after many a struggle, these very principles. To-day, sometimes, there is communal conflict in India, and Hindus and Muslims fight each other and kill each other. It is true that this happens only occasionally in some places, and that mostly we live in peace and friendship, for our real interests are one. It is a shameful thing for any Hindu or Muslim to fight his brother in the name of religion. We must put an end to it, and we will of course do so. But what is important is to get out of that complex ideology of custom, convention and superstition which, under the guise of religion, enchains us.

As in the case of religious toleration, India started off fairly well in regard to political freedom. You will remember our village republics, and how originally the king's powers were supposed to be limited. There was no such thing as the divine right of the kings of Europe. Because our whole polity was based on village freedom, people were careless as to who was the king. If their local freedom was preserved to them what did it matter to them who was the boss above? But this was a dangerous and foolish idea. Gradually the boss on top in-

creased his powers and encroached on the freedom of the village. And a time arrived when we had absolutely autocratic monarchs and there was no village self-government and no shadow of freedom anywhere from the top to the bottom.

## 16. THE AGE OF ENLIGHTENMENT DAWNS IN EUROPE

Right through the Middle Ages religion was the dominant factor in Europe. Even afterwards, this continued to be so. Every question, whether it was political or economic, was considered from the point of view of religion. Religion was organized and meant the views of the Pope or the high officials of the Church. The organization of society was rather like caste in India. The idea of caste originally was a division according to professions or functions. It was this very idea of social classes according to functions that lay at the basis of the ideas of the Middle Ages on society. Within a class, as within a caste in India, there was equality. As between two or more classes, however, there was inequality. This inequality was at the very basis of the whole social structure, and no one challenged it. Those who suffered under this system were told to "expect their reward in heaven." In this way religion tried to uphold the unjust social order and tried to distract people's minds from it by talking of the next world. It also preached what is called the doctrine of trusteeship—that is to say, that the rich man was a kind of trustee for the poor; the landlord held his land "in trust" for his tenant. This was the Church's way of explaining a very awkward situation. It made little difference to the rich man, and it brought no

comfort to the poor. Clever explanations cannot take the place of food in a hungry stomach.

The bitter religious wars between Catholic and Protestant, the intolerance of both the Catholic and the Calvinist, and the Inquisition, all resulted from this intense religious and communal outlook. Think of it! Many hundreds of thousands of women are said to have been burnt in Europe as witches, mostly by Puritans. New ideas in science were suppressed because these were supposed to be in conflict with the Church's view of things. It was a static, an unmoving view of life; there was no question of progress.

We find that these ideas begin to change gradually from the sixteenth century onwards; science appears and the all-embracing hold of religion lessens; politics and economics are considered apart from religion. There is, it is said, a growth of rationalism—that is, of reason as opposed to blind faith—in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The eighteenth century, indeed, is supposed to have established the victory of toleration. This is partly true. But the victory really meant that people had given up attaching as much importance to their religion as they used to. Toleration was very near to indifference. When people are terribly keen about anything they are seldom tolerant about it; it is only when they care little for it that they graciously proclaim that they are tolerant. With the coming of industrialism and the big machine, the indifference to religion grew even more. Science sapped the foundations of the old belief in Europe; the new industry and economics presented new problems which filled people's minds. So people in Europe gave up (but not entirely) the habit of breaking each other's heads on questions of religious belief or dogma; instead, they took to breaking heads on economic and social issues.

This growth of toleration and rationalism in Europe was a slow process. It was not helped much at first by books, as people were afraid to criticize Christianity publicly. To do

so meant imprisonment or some other punishment. A German philosopher was banished from Prussia because he had praised Confucius too much. This was interpreted as a slight on Christianity. In the eighteenth century, however, as these new ideas became clearer and more general, books came out dealing with these subjects. The most famous writer of the time on rationalistic and other subjects was Voltaire, a Frenchman, who was imprisoned and banished, and who ultimately lived at Ferney near Geneva. When in prison he was not allowed paper or ink. So he wrote verses with pieces of lead between the lines of a book. He became a celebrity when quite young. Indeed, he was only ten when he attracted attention by his unusual ability. Voltaire hated injustice and bigotry and he waged war against them. His famous cry was *Ecrasez l'infame*. He lived to a great old age (1694-1778) and wrote an enormous number of books. Because he criticized Christianity he was fiercely hated by orthodox Christians. In one of his books he says that "a man who accepts his religion without examining it is like an ox which allows itself to be harnessed." Voltaire's writings had great influence in making people incline towards rationalism and the new ideas. His old house at Ferney is still a place of pilgrimage for many.

Another great writer, a contemporary of Voltaire but younger, was Jean Jacques Rousseau. He was born in Geneva, and Geneva is very proud of him. Rousseau's writings on religion and politics raised quite an outcry. None the less, his novel and rather daring social and political theories set the minds of many afire with new ideas and new resolves. His political theories are out of date now, but they played an important part in preparing the people of France for the great revolution. Rousseau did not preach revolution, probably he did not even expect one. But his books and ideas certainly sowed the seed in men's minds which blossomed out in the revolution. His best known book is the "Social Contract"—*Du Contrat Social*—and this begins with a famous



sentence (I quote from memory): "Man is born free, but is everywhere in chains."

Rousseau was also a great educationist, and many of the new methods of teaching he suggested are now used in schools.

Besides Voltaire and Rousseau there were many other notable thinkers and writers in France in the eighteenth century. I shall only mention one other name—Montesquieu, who wrote, besides other books, the *Esprit des Lois*. An Encyclopædia also came out in Paris about this time, and this was full of articles by Diderot and other able writers on political and social subjects. Indeed, France seemed to be full of philosophers and thinkers, and, what is more, they were widely read and they succeeded in making large numbers of ordinary people think their thoughts and discuss their theories. Thus there grew up in France a strong body of opinion opposed to religious intolerance and political social privilege. A vague desire for liberty possessed the people. And yet, curiously, neither the philosophers nor the people wanted to get rid of the king. The idea of a republic was not a common one then, and people still hoped that they might have an ideal prince, something like Plato's philosopher king, who would remove their burdens and give them justice and a measure of liberty. At any rate this is what the philosophers write. One is inclined to doubt how far the suffering masses loved the king.

## 17. THE COMING OF THE BIG MACHINE

The Industrial Revolution brought the big machine to the world. It ushered in the Machine Age or the Mechanical Age. Of course there had been machines before, but none had been so big as the new machine. What is a machine? It is a big tool to help man to do his work. Man has been called a tool-making animal, and from his earliest days he has made tools and tried to better them. His supremacy over the other animals, many of them more powerful than he was, was established because of his tools. The tool was an extension of his hand; or you may call it a third hand. The machine was the extension of the tool. The tool and the machine raised man above the brute creation. They freed human society from the bondage of Nature. With the help of the tool and the machine, man found it easier to produce things. He produced more, and yet had more leisure. And this resulted in the progress of the arts of civilization, and of thought and science.

But the big machine and all its allies have not been unmixed blessings. If it has encouraged the growth of civilization, it has also encouraged the growth of barbarism by producing terrible weapons of warfare and destruction. If it has produced abundance, this abundance has not been mainly for the masses, but chiefly for the limited few. It has made the difference between the luxury of the very rich and the poverty of the poor even greater than it was in the past. Instead of being the tool and servant of man, it has presumed to become his master. On the one side, it has taught certain virtues—co-operation, organization, punctuality; on the other,

it has made life itself a dull routine for millions, a mechanical burden with little of joy or freedom in it.

But why should we blame the poor machine for the ills that have followed from it? The fault lies with man, who has misused it, and with society, which has not profited by it fully. It seems to be unthinkable that the world, or any country, can go back to the old days before the Industrial Revolution, and it hardly seems desirable or wise that, in order to get rid of some evils, we should throw away the numerous good things that industrialism has brought us. And, in any event, the machine has come and is going to stay. Therefore the problem for us is to retain the good things of industrialism and to get rid of the evil that attaches to it. We must profit by the wealth it produces, but see to it that the wealth is evenly distributed among those who produce it.

It was not a mere political revolution changing kings and rulers at the top. It was a revolution affecting all the various classes, and indeed everybody. The triumph of the machine and of industrialism meant the triumph of the classes that controlled the machine. As I told you long ago, the class that controls the means of production is the class that rules. In olden times the only important means of production was the land, and therefore those who owned the land—that is, the landlords—were the bosses. In feudal times this was so. Other wealth than land then appears, and the landowning classes begin to share their power with the owners of the new means of production. And now comes the big machine, and naturally the classes that control this come to the front and become the bosses.

Political power was thus in the hands of those who owned landed property. This was so in England, and even more so elsewhere. Landed property was inherited from father to son. Thus political power itself became an inherited privilege. I have already told you of “pocket boroughs” in England—that is, constituencies, returning members to Parliament, con-

sisting of just a few electors. These few electors were usually under someone's control, and thus the borough was said to be in his pocket. Such elections were, of course, farcical, and there was a great deal of corruption and selling of votes and seats in Parliament. Some rich members of the rising middle class could afford to buy a seat in Parliament in this way. But the masses had no look-in either way. They inherited no privileges or power, and obviously they could not buy power. So what could they do when they were sat upon and exploited by the rich and the privileged? They had no voice inside Parliament, or even in the election of members to Parliament. Even outside demonstrations by them were frowned upon by those in authority and put down by force. They were disorganized and weak and helpless. But when the cup of suffering and misery was over-full they forgot law and order and had a riot. There was thus a great deal of lawlessness in England in the eighteenth century. The general economic condition of the people was bad. It was made worse by the efforts of big landlords to increase their estates at the expense of the small farmers who were squeezed out. Common land belonging to villages was also grabbed. All this increased the sufferings of the masses. The people also resented having no voice at all in the government, and there was a vague demand for more liberty.

The new factories swallowed up many of the cottage industries and the private workers. It was not possible for these home-workers to compete with the machine. So they had to give up their old crafts and trades and seek employment as wage-earners in the very factories they hated, or to join the unemployed. The collapse of the cottage industries was not sudden, but it was rapid enough. By the end of the century—that is, by about 1800—the big factories were much in evidence. About thirty years later steam railways began in England with Stephenson's famous engine named the *Rocket*.

And so the machine went on advancing all over the country and in almost all departments of industry and life.

It is interesting to note that all the inventors, many of whom I have not mentioned, came from the class of manual workers. It is from this class also that many of the early industrial leaders came. But the result of their inventions and the factory system that followed was to make the gulf between the employer and the worker wider still. The worker in the factory became just a cog in a machine, helpless in the hands of vast economic forces he could not even understand, much less control. The craftsman and the artisan first sensed that something was wrong when they found that the new factory was competing with them and making and selling articles far cheaper than they could possibly make them with their simple and primitive tools at home. For no fault of theirs they had to shut up their little shops. If they could not carry on with their own crafts, much less could they succeed with a new one. So they joined the army of the unemployed and starved. "Hunger," it has been said, "is the drill-sergeant of the factory owner," and hunger ultimately drove them to the new factories to seek employment. The employers showed them little pity. They gave them work indeed, but at a bare pittance, for which the miserable workers had to pour out their life-blood in the factories. Women, and little children even, worked long hours in stifling, unhealthy places till many of them almost fainted and dropped down with fatigue. Men worked right down below in the coal-mines the whole day long and did not see the daylight for months at a time.

But do not think that all this was just due to the cruelty of the employers. They were seldom consciously cruel; the fault lay with the system. They were out to increase their business and to conquer distant world-markets from other countries, and in order to do this they were prepared to put up with anything. The building of new factories and the purchase of machinery cost a lot of money. It is only after

the factory begins to produce and these goods are sold in the market that the money comes back. So these factory-owners had to economize in order to build and, even when money came by sale of goods, they went on building more factories. They had got a lead over the other countries of the world because of their early industrialization, and they wanted to profit by this—and, indeed, they did profit. So, in their mad desire to increase their business and make more money, they crushed the poor workers whose labour produced the sources of their wealth.

Thus the new system of industry was particularly adapted to the exploitation of the weak by the strong. Right through history we have seen the powerful exploiting the weak. The factory system made this easier. In law there was no slavery, but in fact the starving worker, the wage-slave of the factory, was little better than the old slave. The law was all in favour of the employer. Even religion favoured him and told the poor to put up with their miserable lot here in this world and expect a heavenly compensation in the next. Indeed, the governing classes developed quite a convenient philosophy that the poor were necessary for society, and that therefore it was quite virtuous to pay low wages. If higher wages were paid the poor would try to have a good time, and not work hard enough. It was a comforting and useful way of thinking, because it just fitted in with the material interest of the factory-owners and the other rich people.

It is very interesting and instructive to read about these times. We can see what tremendous effect the mechanical processes of production have on economics and society. The whole social fabric is upset; new classes come to the front and gain power; the artisan class becomes the wage-earning class in the factory. In addition to this, the new economics moulds people's ideas even in religion and morals. The convictions of the mass of mankind run hand in hand with their interests or class-feelings, and they take good care, when they

have the power to do so, to make laws to protect their own interests. Of course all this is done with every appearance of virtue and with every assurance that the good of mankind is the only motive at the back of the law. Our *zamindars* tell us how they love their tenants, but they do not scruple to squeeze and rack-rent them till they have nothing left but their starved bodies. Our capitalists and big factory-owners also assure us of their good-will for their workers, but the good-will does not translate itself into better wages or better conditions for the workers. All the profits go to make new palaces, not to improve the mud hut of the worker.

It is amazing how people deceive themselves and others when it is to their interest to do so. So we find the English employers of the eighteenth century and after resisting all attempts to better the lot of their workers. They objected to factory legislation and housing reform, and refused to admit that society had any obligation to remove the causes of distress. They comforted themselves with the thought that it was the idle only who suffered, and in any event they hardly looked upon the workers as human beings like themselves. They developed a new philosophy which is called *laissez-faire*—that is, they wanted to do just what they liked in their business without any interference from government. By having started factories to make things before other countries had done so, they had got a lead, and all they wanted was a free field to make money. *Laissez-faire* became almost a semi-divine theory which was supposed to give an opportunity to everybody if he could but take advantage of it. Each man and woman was to fight the rest of the world to go ahead, and if many fell in the struggle, what did it matter?

But *laissez-faire* and the new capitalism brought the law of the jungle. "Pig philosophy," Carlyle called it. Who laid down this new law of life and business? Not the workers. The poor fellows had little to say in the matter. It was the successful manufacturers at the top who wanted no inter-

ference with their success in the name of foolish sentiment. So in the name of liberty and the rights of property they objected even to the compulsory sanitation of private houses and interference with the adulteration of goods.

I have just used the word capitalism. Capitalism of a kind had existed in all countries for a long time—that is to say industry was carried on with accumulated money. But with the coming of the big machine and industrialism far larger sums of money were required for factory production. “Industrial capital” this was called, and the word capitalism is now used to refer to the economic system which grew up after the Industrial Revolution. Under this system capitalists—that is, owners of capital—controlled the factories and took the profits. With industrialization capitalism spread all over the world. From its earliest days capitalism emphasized the difference between the rich and the poor. The mechanization of industry resulted in much greater production, and therefore it produced greater wealth. But this new wealth went to a small group only—the owners of the new industries. The workers remained poor. The workers’ share in the profits of industry was very small. The Industrial Revolution and capitalism solved the problem of production. They did not solve the problem of the distribution of the new wealth created. So the old tussle between the haves and the have-nots not only remained, but it became acuter.

Having built up these factories, new wants arose. The factories wanted raw material to convert it into manufactured articles. Thus cotton was required to make cloth. Even more necessary were new markets where the new goods produced by the factories could be sold.

Industrialism spread and capitalist industry developed on the general lines laid down in England. Capitalism led inevitably to a new imperialism, for everywhere there was a demand for raw materials for manufacture and markets to



sell the manufactured goods. So there was a wild scramble among the more powerful countries for new territories.

With the coming of the Industrial Revolution the English world was more and more dominated by the great cloth manufacturers of Lancashire, and the iron-masters and the mine-owners.

## 18. AMERICA REVOLTS AGAINST ENGLAND

We shall now consider the second great revolution of the eighteenth century—the revolt of the American colonies against England. This was a political revolution only, and not so vital as the Industrial Revolution, which we have been studying, or the French Revolution, which was to follow it soon and shake the social foundations of Europe. And yet this political change in America was important and destined to bear great results. The American colonies which became free then have grown to-day into the most powerful, the richest, and industrially the most advanced country in the world.

History never repeats itself exactly, and yet it is strange how near it comes to it sometimes. This incident of the throwing overboard of the tea at Boston in 1773 has become very famous. It is called the “Boston tea-party.” When Bapu [Gandhi] started his salt campaign and the great march to Dandi, and the salt raids, many people in America thought of their “Boston tea-party” and compared the new “salt-party” to it. But of course there was a great deal of difference between the two.

In 1775, war began between England and her American

colonies. What were the colonies fighting for? Not independence, not to cut away from England. Even when fighting had begun and blood had been shed on both sides, the leaders of the colonists continued to address George III of England as their "Most Gracious Sovereign" and to consider themselves as his faithful subjects.

So the colonies did not begin fighting for the sake of independence. Their grievances were taxation and restrictions on trade. They denied the right of the British Parliament to tax them against their will. "No taxation without representation" was their famous cry, and they were not represented in the British Parliament.

The colonists had no army, but they had a vast country to retire and fall back upon whenever necessary. They built up an army, and Washington ultimately became their Commander-in-Chief. They had a few successes and, thinking perhaps that the time was a favourable one for a fling at the old enemy, England, France joined the colonies. Spain also declared war against England. The odds were against England now, but the war dragged on for many years. In 1776 came the famous "Declaration of Independence" of the colonies. In 1782 the war ended, and the Peace of Paris between the warring countries was signed in 1783.

So the thirteen American colonies became an independent republic—the United States of America as they were called. But for a long time each State was jealous of the others and considered itself more or less independent. Only gradually came the feeling of a common nationality. It was a vast country, continually spreading westwards. It was the first great republic of the modern world—tiny Switzerland being the only other real republic at the time. Holland, although republican, was controlled by the aristocracy. England was not only a monarchy, but its Parliament was in the hands of the small rich landowning class. So the United States Republic was a new kind of country. It had no past, as the countries of

Europe and Asia had. It had no relics of feudalism, except in the plantation system and slavery in the south. It had no hereditary nobility. The *bourgeoisie* or middle class had thus few obstacles to its growth, and it grew rapidly. Its population at the time of the War of Independence was less than 4,000,000. [Today it is 180,000,000].

George Washington became the first president of the United States. He was a great landowner from the State of Virginia. Other great men of this period who are considered the founders of the republic are Thomas Paine, Benjamin Franklin, Patrick Henry, Thomas Jefferson, Adams and James Madison. Benjamin Franklin was an especially distinguished man, and was a great scientist. By flying boys' kites he showed that the lightning in the clouds was the same thing as electricity.

The Declaration of Independence of 1776 stated that "all men are born equal." \* This is hardly a correct statement, if analysed, for some are weak and some are strong, some are more intelligent and capable than others. But the idea behind the statement is clear enough and praiseworthy. The colonists wanted to get rid of the feudal inequalities of Europe. That in itself was a very great advance. Probably many of the framers of the Declaration of Independence were influenced by the philosophers and thinkers of eighteenth-century France, from Voltaire and Rousseau onwards.\*\*

"All men are born equal" \*—and yet there was the poor Negro, a slave with few rights! What of him? How did he fit in with the constitution? He did not fit in, and he has not yet fitted in. Many years later there was a bitter civil war between the northern and southern States, and as a result

\* The correct words in the Declaration of Independence are: "All men are *created* equal."

\*\* This is a common misapprehension. Actually, the Americans of the Revolutionary period were more influenced by John Locke and Montesquieu than by Voltaire and Rousseau.

slavery was abolished. But the Negro problem still continues in America.

## 19. THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

We have now considered very briefly two of the revolutions of the eighteenth century. I shall tell you something of the third revolution—the French Revolution. Of the three this one in France created the most stir. The Industrial Revolution, which began in England, was a vastly important one, but it crept on gradually and was almost unnoticed by most people. Few realized at the time its real significance. The French Revolution, on the other hand, burst suddenly on an astonished Europe, like a thunderbolt. Europe was still under a host of monarchs and emperors. The ancient Holy Roman Empire had long ceased to function, but it still existed on paper and its ghost cast a long shadow over Europe. In this world of kings and emperors and courts and palaces, there came, out of the depths of the common people, this strange and terrifying creature, which paid no attention to moss-grown custom or privilege, and which hurled a king from his throne and threatened others with a like fate. Is it surprising that the kings and all the privileged people of Europe trembled before this revolt of the masses, whom they had so long ignored and crushed?

The French Revolution burst like a volcano. And yet revolutions and volcanoes do not break out suddenly without reason or long evolution. We see the sudden burst and are surprised; but underneath the surface of the earth many forces play against each other for long ages, and the fires gather together, till the crust on the surface can hold them

down no longer, and they burst forth in mighty flames shooting up to the sky, and molten lava rolls down the mountain side. Even so the forces that ultimately break out in revolution play for long under the surface of society. Water boils when you heat it; but you know that it has reached boiling point only after getting hotter and hotter.

Ideas and economic conditions make revolutions. Foolish people in authority, blind to everything that does not fit in with their ideas, imagine that revolutions are caused by agitators. Agitators are people who are discontented with existing conditions and desire a change and work for it. Every revolutionary period has its full supply of them; they are themselves the outcome of the ferment and dissatisfaction that exist. But tens and hundreds of thousands of people do not move to action merely at the bidding of an agitator. Most people desire security above everything; they do not want to risk losing what they have got. But when economic conditions are such that their day-to-day suffering grows and life becomes almost an intolerable burden, then even the weak are prepared to take risks. It is then that they listen to the voice of the agitator who seems to show them a way out of their misery.

In every country of Asia and Europe there have been these revolts of the peasantry, often resulting in much bloodshed and in cruel repression. Their distress drove the peasants to revolutionary action, but usually they had no clear ideas of their goal. Because of this vagueness in thought, this want of an ideology, their efforts often ended in failure. In the French Revolution we find a new thing, at any rate on such a big scale—the union of ideas with the economic urge for revolutionary action. Where there is such a union, there is the real revolution, and a real revolution affects the whole fabric of life and society—political, social, economic and religious. We find this happening in France in the last years of the eighteenth century.

[You will recall] the luxury and incompetence and corruption of the French kings and the grinding poverty of the common people. I have [mentioned] the new ideas set going by Voltaire and Rousseau and Montesquieu and many others. So there were the two processes—economic distress and the formation of an ideology—going on together and acting and reacting on each other. It takes a long time to build up the ideology of a people, for new ideas have to filter down gradually to them, and few persons are eager to give up their old prejudices and notions. It so happens, often enough, that by the time a new ideology is established and the people have at last succeeded in accepting a new set of ideas, these ideas themselves are somewhat out of date. It is interesting to notice that the ideas of the French philosophers of the eighteenth century were based on the pre-industrial age in Europe; and yet almost at that very time the Industrial Revolution was beginning in England, and this was changing industry and life so much that in reality it was knocking out the bottom from many of the new French theories. The Industrial Revolution really developed later on, and the French philosophers could not of course guess what was going to happen. Yet their ideas, on which to a large extent the French Revolution based its ideology, were partly out of date, with the coming of big industry.

However that might be, it is clear that these ideas and theories of the French philosophers had a very powerful effect on the Revolution. There had previously been many instances of masses in action in risings and revolts; now there was a remarkable instance of conscious masses in action, or rather consciously guided masses in action. Hence the importance of this great revolution in France.

## 20. THE RISE AND FALL OF NAPOLEON

The French Terror was a terrible thing. And yet it was a flea-bite compared to the chronic evils of poverty and unemployment. The costs of social revolution, however great they might be, are less than these evils and the cost of war which comes to us from time to time under our present political and social system. The Terror of the French Revolution looms large because many titled and aristocratic persons were its victims, and we are so used to honouring the privileged classes that our sympathies go out to them when they are in trouble. It is well to sympathize with them as with others. But it is also well to remember that they are just a few. We may wish them well. But those who really matter are the masses, and we cannot sacrifice the many to a few. " 'Tis the people that compose the human race," writes Rousseau; "what is not people is so small a concern that it is not worth the trouble of counting."

Out of the French Revolution emerged Napoleon. France, Republican France, that had challenged and dared the kings of Europe, succumbed to this little Corsican. A strange, wild beauty had France then. A French poet, Barbier, has compared her to a wild animal, a proud and free mare, with head high and shining skin; a beautiful vagabond, fiercely intolerant of saddle and harness and rein, stamping on the ground, and frightening the world with the noise of her neighing. This proud mare consented to be ridden by the young man from Corsica, and he did many wonderful deeds with her. But he tamed her also and made the wild free thing lose all her

wildness and freedom. And he exploited her and exhausted her till she threw him down and fell down herself.

*O Corse à cheveux plats ! que la France était belle  
 Au grand soleil de messidor !  
 C'était une cavale indomptable et rebelle,  
 Sans frein d'acier, ni rênes d'or ;  
 Une jument sauvage à la coupe rustique,  
 Fumante encore du sang des rois,  
 Mais fière, et d'un pied fort heurtant le sol antique,  
 Libre pour la première fois !  
 Jamais aucune main n'avait passé sur elle  
 Pour la flétrir et l'outrager ;  
 Jamais ses larges flancs n'avaient porté la selle  
 Et le harnais de l'étranger ;  
 Tout son poil reluisait, et, belle vagabonde,  
 L'œil haut, la croupe en mouvement,  
 Sur ses jarrets dressée, elle effrayait le monde  
 Du bruit de son hennissement.*

What manner of man was Napoleon, then? Was he one of the great ones of the earth, the Man of Destiny, as he was called, a mighty hero and one who helped in freeing humanity from its many burdens? Or was he, as H. G. Wells and some others say, a mere adventurer and a wrecker, who did great injury to Europe and civilization? Probably both these views are exaggerated; probably both contain some measure of the truth. All of us are curious mixtures of the good and the bad, the great and the little. He was such a mixture, but, unlike most of us, extraordinary qualities went to make up this mixture. Courage he had and self-confidence and imagination and amazing energy and vast ambition. He was a very great general, a master of the art of war, comparable to the great captains of old—Alexander and Chengiz. But he was petty also, and selfish and self-centred, and the dominating impulse of his life was not the pursuit of an ideal, but the quest of personal power. "My mistress!" he once said,



"Power is my mistress! The conquest of that mistress has cost me so much that I will allow no one to rob me of her, or to share her with me!" Child of the Revolution he was, and yet he dreamt of vast empire, and the conquests of Alexander filled his mind. Even Europe seemed small. The East lured him, and especially Egypt and India. "Only in the East," he said, early in his career when he was twenty-seven, "have there been great empires and mighty changes; in the East where six hundred million people dwell. Europe is a mole-hill!"

Wherever Napoleon went, he carried something of the French Revolution with him, and the peoples of the countries he conquered were not wholly averse to his coming. They were weary of their own effete and half-feudal rulers, who sat heavily upon them. This helped Napoleon greatly, and feudalism fell before him as he marched. In Germany especially was feudalism swept away. In Spain he put an end to the Inquisition. But the very spirit of nationalism that he unconsciously evoked turned against him and ultimately defeated him. He could overpower the old kings and emperors, but not a whole people roused against him. The Spanish people thus rose against him and for years sapped his energy and resources. The German people also organized themselves under a great patriot, Baron von Stein, who became the implacable enemy of Napoleon. There was a German war of liberation. Thus Nationalism, which Napoleon himself had aroused, allied to sea-power, brought about his fall. But in any event it would have been difficult for the whole of Europe to tolerate a dictator. Or perhaps Napoleon himself was correct when he said afterwards: "No one but myself can be blamed for my fall. I have been my own greatest enemy, the cause of my disastrous fate."

This man of genius had the most extraordinary failings. He always had a touch of the *parvenu*, the upstart, about him, and he nourished a strange desire to be treated as an equal

by the old and effete kings and emperors. He advanced his own brothers and sisters in the most absurd way, although they were thoroughly incompetent. The only decent brother was Lucien, who had helped Napoleon at a critical moment during the *coup d'état* of 1799, but who subsequently fell out with him and retired to Italy. The other brothers, vain and foolish, were made kings and rulers by Napoleon. He had a curious and vulgar passion for pushing on his family. Almost every one of them played him false and deserted him when he was in trouble. Napoleon was also very keen on founding a dynasty. Early in his career, even before he had gone on the Italian campaign and become famous, he had married Josephine de Beauharnais, a beautiful but rather flighty lady. He was terribly disappointed at having no children by her, for he had set his heart on a dynasty. So he decided to divorce Josephine and marry another woman, although he liked her. He wanted to marry a Russian Grand Duchess, but the Tsar would not agree to this. Napoleon might be almost the master of Europe, but the Tsar considered it somewhat presumptuous of him to aspire to marry into the Russian imperial family! Napoleon then more or less forced the Hapsburg Emperor of Austria to give him his daughter Marie Louise in marriage. He had a son by her, but she was dull and unintelligent and did not like him at all and made him a bad wife. When he was in trouble, she deserted him and forgot all about him.

Is is very strange how this man, who towered above his generation in some ways, fell a victim to the empty glamour which the old idea of kingship exercised. And yet, often enough, he spoke in terms of revolution and made fun of these effete kings. He had deliberately turned his back on the Revolution and the new order; the old order neither suited him nor was it prepared to have him. So between the two he fell.

It is difficult to judge great and extraordinary men; and

that Napoleon was great in his own way and extraordinary there can be no doubt. He was elemental, almost like a force of Nature. Full of ideas and imagination, he was yet blind to the value of ideals and unselfish motives. He tried to win and impress people by offering them glory and wealth. When therefore his stock of glory and power lessened, there were few ideal motives to keep by him those very people whom he had advanced, and many basely deserted him. Religion was to him just a method of keeping the poor and the miserable satisfied with their lot. Of Christianity he once said: "How could I accept a religion which would damn Socrates and Plato?" When in Egypt he showed some favour to Islam, no doubt because he thought this might win him popularity with the people there. He was thoroughly irreligious, and yet he encouraged religion, for he looked upon it as a prop to the existing social order. "Religion," he said, "associates with heaven an idea of equality, which prevents the poor from massacring the rich. Religion has the same sort of value as vaccination. It gratifies our taste for the miraculous, and protects us from quacks. . . . Society cannot exist without inequality of property; but this latter cannot exist without religion. One who is dying of hunger when the man next to him is feasting on dainties can only be sustained by a belief in a higher power, and by the conviction that in another world there will be a different distribution of goods." In the pride of his strength, he is reported to have said: "Should the heavens fall down on us we shall hold them off with the points of our lances."

He had the magnetism of the great, and he won devoted friendship from many. His glance, like Akbar's, was magnetic. "I have seldom drawn my sword," he said once; "I won my battles with my eyes, not with my weapons." A strange statement for a man who plunged Europe into war! In later years, during his exile, he said that force was no remedy, and that the spirit of man was greater than the sword. "Do

you know," he said, "what amazes me more than all else? The impotence of force to organize anything. There are only two powers in the world: the spirit and the sword. In the long run the sword will always be conquered by the spirit." But there was no long run for him. He was in a hurry, and right at the beginning of his career he had chosen the way of the sword; by the sword he triumphed, and by the sword he fell. Again, he said: "War is an anachronism; some day victories will be won without cannon and without bayonets." Circumstances were too much for him—his vaulting ambition, the ease with which he triumphed in war, and the hatred of the rulers of Europe for this upstart and their fear of him, which allowed him no peace to settle down. He was reckless in sacrificing human lives in battle, and yet it is said that the sight of suffering greatly moved him.

In his personal life he was simple, and never indulged in any excesses, except excess of work. According to him, "However little a man may eat he always eats too much. One can get ill from over-eating, but never from under-eating." It was this simple life which gave him splendid health and vast energy. He could sleep when he liked and as little as he liked. To ride 100 miles in the course of the morning and afternoon was not an extraordinary thing for him.

As his ambition carried him across the European Continent, he began to think of Europe as one State, one unit, with one law, one government. "I shall fuse all the nations into one." Later, chastened by his exile in St. Helena, this idea came back to him, and in a more impersonal form: "Sooner or later, this union [of European nations] will be brought about by the force of events. The first impetus has been given; and after the fall of my system, it seems to me that the only way in which an equilibrium can be achieved in Europe is through a league of nations." More than 100 years later, Europe is still groping and experimenting with a League of Nations!

He wrote a last testament in which he left a message for

his little son, whom he had called the King of Rome, and news even of whom had been so cruelly kept away from him. He hoped that his son would reign one day, and he told him to reign in peace, and not to have recourse to violence. "I was obliged to daunt Europe by arms; in the present day, the way is to convince by reason." But the son was not destined to reign. He died in Vienna in his youth, eleven years after his father.

But all these thoughts came to him during his exile, when he was much chastened, and perhaps also he wrote to influence posterity in his favour. In the days of his greatness he was too much of a man of action to be a philosopher. He worshipped only at the altar of power; his real and only love was power, and he loved it not crudely but as an artist. "I love power," he said—"yes, I love it, but after the manner of an artist: as a fiddler loves his fiddle in order to conjure from it tone and chords and harmonies." But the quest for over-much power is a dangerous one, and sooner or later downfall and ruin come to the individuals or nations who seek it. So Napoleon fell, and it was as well that he fell.

## 21. THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

Napoleon fell in 1814; he returned from Elba next year and was again defeated, but his system had collapsed in 1814. Exactly one hundred years later, in 1914, began the Great War, which spread almost all over the world and, during the four years that it lasted, caused terrible loss and suffering. We shall have to consider this period of one hundred years in some detail.

These one hundred years from 1814 to 1914 fell, as you will of course notice, very largely in the nineteenth century. The nineteenth century is a fascinating period. It is a vast

panorama, a great picture, and because we are so near to it, it appears to us bigger and fuller than the centuries that preceded it. This bigness and complexity are rather apt to overwhelm us at times, as we try to unravel the thousand threads that go to make it up.

It was the century of marvellous mechanical progress. The Industrial Revolution brought in its train the Mechanical Revolution, and machines became more and more important in man's life. They did a great deal that man had done before, and eased his drudgery, and lessened his dependence on the elements, and produced wealth for him. Science helped greatly, and travel and transport became swifter and ever swifter. The railway came and displaced the stagecoach; the steamship took the place of the sailing-ship, and then came the great ocean liner, powerful and stately, going from continent to continent with speed and regularity. Towards the end of the century came the automobile, and motor-cars spread out all over the world. And lastly came the aeroplane. At the same time man began to control and utilize a new wonder—electricity—and the telegraph and telephone appeared. All this made a vast difference to the world. As the means of communication developed and people travelled faster and faster, the world seemed to shrink and become much smaller. We are used to all this to-day, and we seldom think about it. But all these improvements and changes are newcomers to this world of ours; they have all come within the last hundred years.

It was also the century of Europe, or rather of Western Europe, and especially of England. The Industrial and Mechanical Revolutions had begun and progressed there, and they gave a great lead to western Europe. England was pre-lominant in sea-power and industry, but gradually the other countries of western Europe caught up with it. The United States of America also forged ahead with this new mechanical civilization, and railroads carried them westwards to the

Pacific, and made the huge country one nation. They were too busy with their own problems and their expansion to trouble themselves much about Europe and the rest of the world. But they were strong enough to resent and prevent any interference from Europe. The Monroe Doctrine, about which I told you in my last letter, preserved the republics of South America from the greed of Europe. These republics are called the Latin republics, as they were founded by people from Spain and Portugal. These two countries, as well as Italy and France, are called Latin nations. The northern countries of Europe are, on the other hand, Teutonic, England being the Anglo-Saxon branch of the Teutons. The people of the United States of America originally came from this Anglo-Saxon stock, but of course all kinds of immigrants have gone there since.

The rest of the world was backward industrially and mechanically, and could not compete with the new mechanical civilization of the West. The new machine industries of Europe produced goods far more rapidly and abundantly than the old cottage-industries. But to produce these goods raw material was required, and much of this was not to be had in western Europe; and when the goods were produced, they had to be sold, and so markets for them were necessary. So western Europe searched for countries which would provide this raw material and buy the manufactured goods. Asia and Africa were weak, and Europe fell on them like a beast of prey. In the race for empire, England, by virtue of her lead in industry and her sea-power, was easily first.

You will remember that Europeans first came to India and the East to buy spices and other articles in demand in Europe. Thus Eastern goods went to Europe, and many a product of an Eastern handloom went west. But now, with the development of the machine, this process was reversed. The cheaper goods of western Europe came to the East, and the cottage-industries of India were deliberately killed by the

East India Company in order to encourage the sale of English goods.

Europe sat on giant Asia. In the north the Russian Empire sprawled across the whole continent. In the south England had firm hold over the biggest prize of all—India. In the west the Turkish Empire was going to pieces, and Turkey was referred to as the “Sick man of Europe.” Persia, nominally independent, was dominated by England and Russia. The whole of southeastern Asia—Burma, Indo-China, Malay, Java, Sumatra, Borneo, the Philippines, etc.—was absorbed by Europe, with the exception of a bit of Siam. In the Far East China was being nibbled at by all the European powers and concession after concession was forced out of her. Only Japan stood upright and faced Europe as an equal. She had come out of her seclusion and adjusted herself to the new conditions with remarkable rapidity.

Africa was very backward, except for Egypt. It could offer no effective resistance to Europe, and so the European Powers fell on it in a mad race for empire and divided up this huge continent. England occupied Egypt, for it was on the way to India, and British policy henceforth was dominated by the desire to hold on to India. The Suez Canal was opened in 1869, and this made the journey from Europe to India much shorter; it also made Egypt more valuable to England, for Egypt could interfere with the canal, and thus controlled the sea-route to India.

So, as a result of the Mechanical Revolution, capitalist civilization spread all over the world and Europe was dominant everywhere. And capitalism led to imperialism. So that the century might also be called the century of imperialism. But this new Imperial Age was very different from the old imperialisms of Rome and China and India and the Arabs and Mongols. There was a new type of empire, hungry for raw materials and markets. The new imperialism was the child of the new industrialism. “Trade follows the flag,” it was said,



and often enough the flag followed the Bible. Religion, science, the love of one's own country, all were prostituted to one end—the exploitation of the weaker and industrially more backward peoples of the earth, so that the lords of the big machine, the princes of industrialism, might grow richer and richer. The Christian missionary, going in the name of truth and love, was often the outpost of empire, and if any harm befell him, his country made this an excuse to seize territory and extort concessions.

The capitalist organization of industry and civilization led inevitably to this imperialism. Capitalism also led to an intensification of the feeling of nationalism, so that you can also call this century the century of nationalism. This nationalism was not merely a love of one's own country, but a hatred of all others. From this glorification of one's own patch of land and contemptuous running down of others, trouble and friction between different countries were bound to result.

A blind nationalism thus began to dominate Europe. This was strange, for the speeding up of communications had brought different countries closer to each other and many more people travelled. One would have thought that as people grew to know their neighbours better, their prejudices would lessen and their narrow-mindedness give place to a broader outlook. To some extent this undoubtedly took place, but the whole structure of society under the new industrial capitalism was such that it bred friction between nation and nation, class and class, and man and man.

Nationalism also grew in the East. It took the shape of resistance to the foreigner, who was dominating and exploiting the country. At first the feudal relics in eastern countries resisted foreign domination, because they felt that their position was threatened. They failed, as they were bound to do. A new nationalism then arose tinged with a religious outlook. Gradually this religious colouring faded off and a nationalism of the western type emerged. In Japan, foreign domination

was avoided, and an intense half-feudal nationalism was encouraged.

Asia began to resist European aggression from the earliest days, but the resistance became half-hearted when the power and efficiency of the new weapons which the European armies possessed were realized. The growth of science and the mechanical progress made in Europe had made these European armies far more powerful than anything the East had then. Eastern countries therefore felt powerless before them and bowed their heads in despair. Some people say that the East is spiritual and the West material. This kind of remark is very deceptive. The real difference between the East and the West at the time when Europe came as aggressor, in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, was the medievalism of the East and the industrial and mechanical progress of the West. India and other eastern countries were dazzled at first, not only by the military efficiency of the West, but also by their scientific and technical progress. All this combined to give them a feeling of inferiority in regard to military and technical matters. In spite of this, however, nationalism grew, and the desire to resist foreign aggression and turn out the foreigner. Early in the twentieth century an event occurred which had a great effect on the mind of Asia. This was the defeat of Tsarist Russia by Japan. For little Japan to defeat one of the greatest and most powerful of European Powers surprised most people; in Asia the surprise was a most pleasant one. Japan was looked upon as the representative of Asia battling against western aggression and, for the moment, became very popular all over the East. Of course Japan was no such representative of Asia, and she fought for her own hand just like any Great Power of Europe. I remember well how excited I used to get when news came of the Japanese victories. I was about your age then.

So, as the imperialism of the West became more and more aggressive, nationalism grew in the East to counter it and

fight it. All over Asia, from the Arab nations in the West to the Mongolian nations of the Far East, national movements took shape, advanced cautiously at first and moderately, and then became more and more extreme in their demands. India saw the beginnings and early years of the National Congress. The revolt of Asia had begun.

## 22. CAPITALISM, IMPERIALISM AND NATIONALISM

I told you of some of the distinguishing features of the nineteenth century and of the many things that resulted from the industrial capitalism which took possession of western Europe after the coming of the big machine. One of the reasons why western Europe took the lead in this was the possession by it of coal seams and iron ore. Coal and iron were essential for the making and working of the big machines.

This capitalism led, as we saw, to imperialism and nationalism. Nationalism was no new thing; it had existed before. But it became intenser and narrower. At the same time it bound together and separated; those living in one national unit came closer to each other, but they were cut off more and more from others living in a different national unit. While patriotism grew in each country, it was accompanied by dislike and distrust of the foreigner. In Europe, the industrially advanced countries glared at each other like beasts of prey. England, having got most of the booty, wanted naturally to stick to it. But for other countries, notably Germany, there was too much of England all over the place. So friction increased, and ended in open fighting. The whole structure

of industrial capitalism, and its offshoot imperialism, leads to this friction and conflict. Inherent in them there seem to be contradictions which cannot be reconciled, based as they are on conflict and competition and exploitation. Thus in the East, nationalism, child of imperialism, became its bitter enemy.

In spite of these contradictions, however, the capitalist form of civilization taught many a useful lesson. It taught organization, for the big machine and large-scale industry require a great deal of organization before they can function. It taught co-operation in large undertakings. It taught efficiency and punctuality. It is not possible to run big factories or a railway system unless these qualities are present. Sometimes it is said that these qualities are typical western qualities and the East does not possess them. In this, as in most other matters, there is no question of the East and the West. The qualities were developed because of industrialism, and the West, being industrialized, possesses them, while the East, being still largely agricultural and not industrialized, is lacking in them.

Industrial capitalism performed one other great service. It showed how wealth could be produced by power production—that is, with the help of the big machine and coal and steam. The old fear that there was not enough in the world to go round, and so there must always be vast numbers of poor people, had the bottom knocked out of it. With the help of science and machinery, enough food and clothing, and every other thing that was necessary, could be produced for the world's population. The problem of production was thus solved, at least in theory. And yet there it stopped. Wealth was undoubtedly produced abundantly, but the poor remained poor and, indeed, became poorer. In the eastern and African countries, under European domination, there was of course naked and unashamed exploitation. There was no one to care for the unhappy people who lived there. But even in

western Europe poverty remained and became more and more obvious. For a while the exploitation of the rest of the world brought wealth to western Europe. Most of this wealth remained with the few rich people at the top, but a little percolated through to the poorer classes, and their standard of living went up a little. Population also increased very greatly.

But much of this wealth, and the raising of the standard of living was at the expense of exploited people in Asia, Africa, and other non-industrialized areas. This exploitation and flow of wealth hid for a while the contradictions of the capitalist system. Even so, the difference between the rich and the poor grew; the distance became greater. They were two different peoples, two separate nations. Benjamin Disraeli, a great English statesman of the nineteenth century, has described them:

Two nations; between whom there is no intercourse and no sympathy; who are as ignorant of each other's habits, thoughts and feelings, as if they were dwellers in different zones, or inhabitants of different planets; who are formed by a different breeding, are fed by a different food, are ordered by different manners, are not governed by the same laws . . . the Rich and the Poor.

The new conditions of industry brought large numbers of workers to the big factories, and so a new class arose—that of the factory-worker. These people were different from the peasants and field-workers in many ways. The peasant has to rely a great deal on the seasons and the rainfall. These are not under his control, and so he begins to think that his misery and poverty are due to supernatural causes. He becomes superstitious and ignores economic causes, and lives a dull, hopeless life, resigned to an unkind fate which he cannot alter. But the factory-worker works with machines, things made by man; he produces goods regardless of the seasons and the rainfall; he produces wealth, but he finds that this

very largely goes to others and that he himself remains poor; to some extent he can see economic laws in action. And so he does not think of supernatural causes and is not so superstitious as the peasant. For his poverty he does not blame the gods; he blames society or the social system, and especially the capitalist owner of the factory who takes such a big part of the profits of his labour. He becomes class-conscious, and sees that there are different classes and the upper classes prey on his class. And this leads to discontent and revolt. The first murmurs of discontent are vague and dull; the first uprisings are blind and thoughtless and weak, and they are easily crushed by the government. For the government now wholly represents the interests of the new middle class which controls the great factories and their offshoots. But hunger cannot be crushed for long, and soon the poor worker finds a new source of strength in union with his comrades. So trade unions arise to protect the worker and fights for his rights. They are secret bodies at first, for the government will not even permit the workers to organize themselves. It becomes clearer and clearer that the government is definitely a class government, out to protect by all means the class it represents. Laws also are class laws. Slowly the workers gain strength, and their trade unions become powerful organizations. Different kinds of workers see that their interests are really one as against the exploiting class in power. So different trade unions co-operate together and the factory-workers of a country become one organized group. The next step is for the workers of different countries to unite, for they too feel that their interests are common and the enemy is a common one. Thus arises the cry: "Workers of the World Unite," and international organizations of workers are formed. Capitalist industry also grows meanwhile, and becomes international. And so labour confronts capitalism, wherever this industrial capitalism flourishes.

I have gone ahead too fast and must go back. But this nine-

teenth-century world is such a jumble of many tendencies, often contradicting each other, that it is difficult to keep them all in view. What will you make, I wonder, of this strange mixture of capitalism and imperialism and nationalism and internationalism and wealth and poverty? But life itself is a strange mixture. We have to take it as it is, try to understand it, and then to better it.

This jumble of misfits made many people in Europe and America think. Early in the century, after Napoleon fell, there was little liberty in any European country. In some of these countries there was the king's despotism, in some, like England, a small aristocratic and rich class was in power. Everywhere, as I have told you, there was repression of the liberal elements. But in spite of this, the American and the French Revolutions had made the ideas of democracy and political liberty known and appreciated by liberal thinkers. Democracy, indeed, began to be looked upon as the cure for all the ills and troubles of the State and the people. The democratic ideal was that there should be no privilege; every person should be treated by the State as of equal social and political value. Of course people differ greatly from each other in many ways: some are stronger than others, some wiser, some more unselfish. But the believers in democracy said that whatever their differences might be, men should have the same political status. And this was to be brought about by giving everyone the vote. Advanced thinkers and liberals believed in the virtues of democracy fervently, and they tried hard to bring it about. The conservatives and reactionaries opposed them, and everywhere there was a great tussle. In some countries there were revolutions. England was on the verge of civil war before the franchise was extended—that is, votes for electing members to Parliament were given to some more people. Gradually, however, democracy triumphed in most places, till by the end of the century most men at least had the vote in western Europe and America. Democracy had

been the great ideal of the nineteenth century, so much so that the century might also be called the century of democracy. Democracy had triumphed in the end, and yet, when this end came, people had begun to lose faith in it. They found that it had failed to put an end to poverty and misery and many contradictions of the capitalist system. What was the good of a vote to a man who was hungry? And what was the measure of the liberty he had if his vote or his services could be purchased for the price of a meal? So democracy fell into disrepute, or, to be correct, political democracy went out of favour. But this is outside the scope of the nineteenth century.

Democracy dealt with the political aspect of liberty. It was a reaction against autocracy and other despotisms. It offered no special solution of the industrial problems that were arising, or of poverty, or class conflict. It laid stress on a theoretical freedom of each individual to work according to his bent, in the hope that he would try, from self-interest, to better himself in every way, and thus society would progress. This was the doctrine of *laissez-faire*, about which I think I wrote to you in a previous letter. But the theory of individual freedom failed because the man who was compelled to work for a wage was far from free.

The great difficulty that arose under the system of industrial capitalism was this: those who worked and thus served the community were poorly paid, the rewards went to others who did not work. Thus the rewards were divorced from the services. This resulted, on the one hand, in the degradation and impoverishment of those who laboured; and, on the other hand, in the creation of a class who lived, or rather sponged, on industry without themselves working in it or adding in any way to its wealth. It was like the peasantry, who worked on the land, and the *zamindar*, who profited by their labour, without working on the land himself. This distribution of the fruits of labour was manifestly unjust; what is more, the



worker, unlike the long-suffering peasant, felt that it was unjust, and resented it; it tended to get worse as time went on. In all the industrialized countries of the West these discrepancies became glaring, and thoughtful and earnest people tried to find a way out of the tangle. Thus arose the set of ideas known as socialism, child of capitalism, and enemy of it, and perhaps destined to supplant it. In England it took a moderate form, in France and Germany it was more revolutionary. In the United States of America the comparatively small population in a vast country had plenty of opportunity for growth, and so the injustices and misery which capitalism brought to western Europe were not apparent to the same extent for a long time.

In the middle of the nineteenth century there arose a man in Germany who was destined to become the prophet of socialism and the father of that form of socialism which is known as communism. His name was Karl Marx. He was not just a vague philosopher or a professor who discussed academic theories. He was a practical philosopher, and his method was to apply the technique of science to the study of political and economic problems, and thus to find a remedy for the world's ills. Philosophy, he said, had hitherto merely set out to explain the world; communist philosophy must aspire to change it. Together with another man, Engels, he issued the "Communist Manifesto" which gave the outline of his philosophy. Later he published a mighty book in German called *Das Kapital* or *Capital*, in which he reviewed the world's history scientifically, and showed in what direction society was developing and how this process could be hurried up. I shall not try to explain the Marxian philosophy here. But I should like you to remember that Marx's great book had tremendous influence on the development of socialism, and it is to-day the Bible of Communist Russia.

Another famous book, which came out in England about the middle of the century, and created a great sensation was

Darwin's *Origin of Species*. Darwin was a naturalist—that is, he observed and studied Nature, and especially plants and animals. He showed, with the help of many examples, how plants and animals had developed in Nature, how one species had changed into another by a process of natural selection, how simple forms had gradually become more complex. This kind of scientific reasoning was directly opposed to some religious teachings about the creation of the world and the animals and man. There was then a great argument between the scientists and the believers in these teachings. The real conflict was not so much about facts as about the attitude to life generally. The narrow religious attitude was largely one of fear and magic and superstition. Reasoning was not encouraged, and people were asked to believe in what they were told, and were not to question why. Many subjects were wrapped up in a mystic covering of sanctity and holiness, and were not to be uncovered or touched. The spirit and methods of science were very different from this. For science was curious to find out everything. It would not take anything for granted, nor would the supposed holiness of a subject frighten it away. It probed into everything, and discouraged superstition, and believed only in such things as could be established by experiment or reason.

The spirit of science won in this struggle with a fossilized religious outlook. Most people who thought about these matters had already, even as far back as the eighteenth century, become rationalists. You will remember that I told you of the wave of philosophic thought in France before the Revolution. But now the change went deeper into society. The average educated person began to be affected by the progress of science. He did not perhaps think very deeply on the subject, nor did he know much about science. But he could not help being awed by the pageant of discovery and invention that unfolded itself before him. The railway, electricity, the telegraph, telephone, phonograph and ever so many other

things came one after the other, and they were all children of the scientific method. They were hailed as the triumph of science. Science was seen, not only to increase human knowledge, but also to increase man's control over Nature. It is not surprising that science triumphed and that people bowed down in worship before this all-powerful new god. And the men of science of the nineteenth century became very complacent and cocksure of themselves, and very definite in their opinions. Science has made vast progress from those days half a century ago, but to-day the attitude is very different from that complacency and cocksureness of the nineteenth century. To-day the real scientist feels that the ocean of knowledge is a vast and boundless one, and though he seeks to sail on it, he is humbler and more hesitating than his predecessors.

Another notable feature of the nineteenth century was the great progress of popular education in the West. This was opposed with great vigour by many members of the ruling classes, who said that it would make the common people discontented, seditious, insolent, and un-Christian! Christianity, according to this argument, consists in ignorance and a willing obedience to the rich and powerful. But in spite of this opposition, elementary schools were introduced and popular education spread. Like many other features of the nineteenth century, this also was a consequence of the new industrialism. For the big factory and big machine required industrial efficiency, and this could only be produced by education. The society of the period was in great need of all kinds of skilled labour; this need was met by popular education.

This widespread elementary education produced a very large class of literate people. They could hardly be called educated, but they could read and write, and the habit of reading newspapers spread. Cheap newspapers came out and had enormous circulations. They began to exercise a powerful influence over people's minds. Often indeed they misled and

roused men's passions against a neighbouring country, and thus led to war. But, in any event, the "Press" definitely became a power to be reckoned with.

Much that I have written in this letter applies chiefly to Europe, and particularly to western Europe. To North America, also it applies to some extent. The rest of the world, Asia, with the exception of Japan and Africa, were passive and suffering agents of Europe's policy. The nineteenth century was, as I have said, the century of Europe. Europe seemed to fill the picture; Europe occupied the centre of the world's stage. In the past there had been long periods when Asia dominated Europe. There were periods when the centres of civilization and progress lay in Egypt or Iraq or India or China or Greece or Rome or Arabia. But the old civilizations exhausted themselves and became petrified and fossilized. The vital element of change and progress left them, and life passed on to other regions. It was Europe's turn now, and Europe was all the more dominant because of the progress in communications which made all parts of the world easily and rapidly accessible.

The nineteenth century saw the flowering of European civilization—*bourgeois* civilization it is called, because the *bourgeois* classes, produced by industrial capitalism, dominated it. I have told you of many of the contradictions and bad points of this civilization. We in India and the East saw these bad points especially, and suffered from them. But no country and no people can rise to greatness unless they have something of the stuff of greatness in them, and western Europe had such stuff in her. And the prestige of Europe rested ultimately not so much on her military power as on the qualities which had made her great. There was an abundant life and vitality and creative power evident everywhere. Great poets and writers and philosophers and scientists and musicians and engineers and men of action were produced. And undoubtedly even the lot of the common man in western

Europe was far better than it had ever been before. The great capital cities—London, Paris, Berlin, New York—became bigger and bigger, and higher and higher went their buildings, and luxury increased, and science offered a thousand ways of lessening human toil and drudgery and of adding to the comfort and pleasure of life. And life among the well-to-do classes became mellow and cultured, and a certain complacency and self-sufficiency and unctuousness came to them. It seems almost like the pleasant afternoon or evening of a civilization.

So, in the second half of the nineteenth century, Europe bore a pleasant and prosperous aspect, and it seemed, on the surface at least, that this mellow culture and civilization would endure and progress from triumph to triumph. But if you peeped below the surface, you would see a strange commotion and many an unpleasant sight. For this prosperous culture was largely meant for the upper classes of Europe only, and it was based on the exploitation of many countries and many peoples. You would see the contradictions and the national hatreds and the grim and cruel face of imperialism. You would not then be so sure about the permanence or charm of this nineteenth-century civilization. The outside body was fair enough, but there was a canker in the heart; there was a great deal of talk of health and progress, but decadence was eating at the vitals of this *bourgeois* civilization.

The crash came in 1914.

## 23. THE BRITISH IN INDIA

British policy in India resulted in the death of Indian cottage-industries and the driving of the artisan to agriculture

and the village. This over-pressure or burden on the land of far too many people who have no other occupation is the great problem in India. It is due to this, largely, that India is poor. If these people could be diverted from the land and given other wealth-producing occupations, they would not only add to the wealth of the country, but the pressure on land would be greatly relieved, and even agriculture would prosper.

It is often said that this over-pressure on land is due to the growth of the population of India. This argument is not a correct one. It is true that the population of India has gone up during the last one hundred years, but so have the populations of most other countries. In Europe, indeed, the proportionate increase, especially in England and Belgium and Holland and Germany, has been far greater. The question of the growth of population of a country, or of the world as a whole, and how to provide for it, and how to restrict it, when necessary, is a very important one. I should like to make it clear that the real cause of the pressure on land in India is the want of occupations other than agriculture, and not the growth of population. The present population of India could probably be easily absorbed and thrive in India if other occupations and industries were forthcoming. It may be that later we shall have to deal with the question of the growth of population.

As late as 1830 a British Governor in India, Sir Charles Metcalfe, described the village communities as follows:

The village communities are little republics having nearly everything they want within themselves; and almost independent of foreign relations. They seem to last where nothing else lasts. This union of the village communities, each one forming a separate little State in itself . . . is in a high degree conducive to their happiness, and to the enjoyment of a great portion of freedom and independence.

This description is very complimentary to the old village system. We have a picture of an almost idyllic state of affairs. Undoubtedly the amount of local freedom and independence that the villages had was a good thing, and there were other good features also. But we must not lose sight of the defects of the system. To live a self-sufficient village life cut off from the rest of the world was not conducive to progress in anything. Growth and progress consist in co-operation between larger and larger units. The more a person or a group keeps to himself or itself, the more danger there is of him or it becoming self-centred and selfish and narrow-minded. Village folk when compared to town people are often narrow-minded and superstitious. So the village communities, with all their good points, could not be centres of progress. They were rather primitive and backward. Handicrafts and industry flourished mainly in the towns. Of course there were large numbers of weavers spread out in the villages.

The real reason why the village communities lived their separate lives, without much contact with each other, was the lack of means of communication. There were few good roads connecting villages. It was, indeed, this lack of good roads that made it rather difficult for the Central Government of the country to intervene too much in village affairs. Towns and villages on the banks of, or near, good-sized rivers could communicate by boats, but there were not many rivers that could be used in this way. This want of easy communications came in the way of internal trade also.

The East India Company, for a great many years, were only interested in making money and paying dividends to their shareholders. They spent very little on roads, and nothing at all on education and sanitation and hospitals and the like. But later, when the British began to concentrate on buying raw material and selling British machine-goods, a different policy regarding communications was adopted. On the sea

coast of India new cities sprang up to serve the growing foreign trade. These cities—like Bombay, Calcutta, Madras, and later Karachi—collected raw material, such as cotton, etc., for despatch to foreign countries, and received foreign machine-goods, especially from England, for distribution and sale in India. These new cities were very different from the great industrial cities that were growing in the West, like Liverpool and Manchester and Birmingham and Sheffield. The European cities were manufacturing centres, with big factories making goods, and ports for the despatch of these goods. The new Indian cities produced nothing. They were just depots for foreign trade, and symbols of foreign rule.

These new cities on the seaboard had to be connected with the interior to be able to help in the collection of raw material and the distribution of foreign goods. Some other cities also grew up as capitals or administrative centres of provinces. The need for good communications thus became urgent. Roads were made and later railways. The first railway was built in Bombay in 1853.

The old village communities were hard put to it to adapt themselves to the changing conditions produced by the destruction of Indian industries. But when more good roads and railways came and spread all over the country, the old village system, which had survived for so long, broke up at last and ended. The little village republic could not keep cut off from the world when the world came knocking at its gate. The price of articles in one village immediately affected prices in another, for articles could be sent easily from one village to another. Indeed, as world communications developed, the price of wheat in Canada or the United States of America would affect the price of Indian wheat. Thus the Indian village system was dragged, by the force of events, into the circle of world prices. The old economic order in the village went to pieces and, much to the astonishment of the peasant, a new order was forced on him.



Instead of growing food and other stuffs for his village market, he began to grow for the world market. He was caught in the whirlpool of world production and prices, and he sank lower and lower. Previously there had been famines in India when a harvest failed, and there was nothing to fall back upon, and no suitable means of obtaining food from other parts of the country. There were famines of food. But now a strange thing happened. People would starve in the midst of plenty, or when food was available. Even if food were not locally available, it could be brought from elsewhere by train and other swift means. The food was there, but there was no money to buy it. Thus there were famines of money, and not food. And, stranger still, sometimes the very abundance of a harvest brought misery in its train for the peasantry, as we have seen during the last three years of depression.

So the old village system ended, and the *panchayat* ceased to exist. We need not express any great regret for this, as the system had outlived its day and did not fit in with modern conditions. But here again it broke up without any rebirth of a new village system in accord with these conditions. This work of rebuilding and rebirth still remains to be done by us.

We have so far considered the indirect results of British policy on the land and the peasant. Let us now consider what the actual land policy of the East India Company was—that is, the policy which directly affected the peasant and all connected with the land.

We hear of *zamindars* and *talukadars* and their tenants; and there are many kinds of tenants; and there are sub-tenants—that is, tenants of tenants. Broadly speaking, the *zamindars* to-day are middle-men—that is, they stand between the cultivator and the State. The cultivator is their tenant, and he pays them rent, or a kind of tax, for the use of the land, which is supposed to belong to the *zamindar*. Out of this rent the *zamindar* pays a portion as land revenue to the State,

as a tax on his land. Thus the produce of the land is divided up into three parts; one part goes to the *zamindar*, another to the State, and the third remains with the tenant-cultivator. Do not imagine that these parts are equal. The cultivator works on the land, and it is due to his labour, ploughing and sowing and dozens of other activities, that the land produces anything. He is obviously entitled to the fruits of his toil. The State, as representing society as a whole, has important functions to perform in the interests of everybody. Thus it ought to educate all the children, and build good roads and other means of communication, and have hospitals and sanitary services, and parks and museums, and a vast number of other things. For this it requires money, and it is right that it should take a share out of the produce of the land. What that share should be is another question. What the cultivator gives to the State really comes back to him, or ought to come back to him, in the shape of services—roads, education, sanitation, etc. In a properly organized and free country the State is the people.

So we have disposed of two parts of the produce of the land—one going to the cultivator and the other to the State. A third part, as we have seen, goes to the *zamindar* or middle-man. What does he do to get it or deserve it? Nothing at all, or practically nothing. He just takes a big share in the produce—his rent—without helping in any way in the work of production. He thus becomes a fifth wheel in the coach—not only unnecessary, but an actual encumbrance, and a burden on the land. And naturally the person who suffers most from this unnecessary burden is the cultivator, who has to give part of his earnings to him. It is for this reason that many people think that the *zamindar* or *taluqadar* is a wholly unnecessary middle-man, and that the *zamindari* system is bad and ought to be changed so that the middle-man disappears.

This *zamindari* system which flourishes in Bengal, Bihar, and the United Provinces, is quite a new thing in India. It is

a creation of the British. It did not exist before they came.

In the old times there were no such *zamindars* or landholders or middle-men. The cultivators gave a part of their produce direct to the State. Sometimes the village *panchayat* acted on behalf of all the cultivators of the village. In Akbar's time, his famous Finance Minister, Raja Todar Mal, had a very careful survey of the land made. The government or State took one-third of the produce from the cultivator, who could, if he so chose, pay in cash. Taxes were on the whole not heavy, and they increased very gradually. Then came the collapse of the Moghal Empire. The Central Government weakened and could not collect their taxes properly. A new way of collection then arose. Tax collectors were appointed, not on salary, but as agents who could keep one-tenth of the collections for themselves. They were called revenue-farmers, or sometimes *zamindars* or *taluqadars*, but remember that these words did not mean what they mean to-day.

As the Central Government decayed, the system became worse and worse. It even came to this, that auctions were held for the revenue-farming of an area, and the highest bidder got it. This meant that the man who got the job had a free hand to extort as much as he could from the unhappy cultivator, and he used this freedom to the full. Gradually these revenue-farmers tended to become hereditary as the government was too weak to remove them.

As a matter of fact, the first so-called legal title of the East India Company in Bengal was that of revenue-farmer on behalf of the Moghal Emperor. This was the grant of the *Diwani* to the Company in 1765. The Company thus became a kind of Diwan of the Moghal Emperor at Delhi. But all this was fiction. After Plassey, in 1757, the British were predominant in Bengal, and the poor Moghal Emperor had little or no power anywhere.

The East India Company and its officers were terribly greedy. They emptied the treasury of Bengal and laid violent

hands on money wherever they could find it. They tried to squeeze Bengal and Bihar and extract the maximum of land revenue. They created smaller revenue-farmers and they increased the revenue demand on them most exorbitantly. The land revenue was doubled in a short space and collected pitilessly, any one not paying up punctually being turned out. The revenue-farmers, in their turn, were cruel and rapacious to the cultivators, who were rack-rented and ejected from their holdings. Within twelve years of Plassey, within four years of the grant of the *Diwani*, the policy of the East India Company, added to want of rain, brought about a terrible famine in Bengal and Bihar, when one-third of the whole population perished. [In the] famine of 1769-70 the East India Company collected the full amount of revenue. The officers of the Company deserve special mention for their remarkable efficiency. Men and women and children died by tens of millions, but they were able to extort money even out of the corpses, so that big dividends might be paid to wealthy men in England.

So matters went on for another twenty years or more, and, despite the famine, the East India Company continued to extort money, and the fair province of Bengal was brought to ruin. Even the big revenue-farmers were reduced to beggary, and from this one can imagine what the state of the miserable cultivator was. Things were so bad that the East India Company woke up and made an attempt to remedy them. The Governor-General of the day, Lord Cornwallis, himself a big landlord in England, wanted to create landlords after the British fashion in India. The revenue-farmers for some time past had been behaving like landlords. Cornwallis came to a settlement with them and treated them as such. The result was that for the first time India got this new type of middle-man, and the cultivators were reduced to the position of mere tenants. The British dealt with these

land-holders or *zamindars* directly, and left them to do what they liked with their tenantry.

This settlement that Cornwallis made with the *zamindars* of Bengal and Bihar in 1793 is called the "Permanent Settlement." The word "settlement" means the fixing of the amount of land revenue to be paid by each *zamindar* to the Government. For Bengal and Bihar this was fixed permanently. There was to be no change. Later on, as British rule spread in the north-west to Oudh and Agra, the British policy was changed. They had temporary settlements with *zamindars*, not permanent as in Bengal. Each temporary settlement was revised periodically, usually every thirty years, and the sum to be paid as land revenue was fixed afresh. Usually it was enhanced at every settlement.

In the south, in Madras and round about, the *zamindari* system did not prevail. There was peasant proprietorship there, and so the East India Company settled directly with the peasants. But there, and everywhere, an insatiable greed made the Company's officers fix the land revenue at a very high figure, and this was cruelly extorted. For non-payment there was immediate ejection, but where was the poor man to go to? Owing to the over-pressure on land there was always a demand for it; there were always starving people who were willing to accept it on any conditions. Frequently there were troubles and agrarian riots when even the long-suffering peasant could bear no more.

About the middle of the nineteenth century another tyranny arose in Bengal. Certain English people established themselves as landlords in order to carry on trade in indigo. They made very hard terms with their tenants about the cultivation of the indigo plant. The tenants were compelled to grow the indigo plant in a certain part of their holdings, and then had to sell this at a fixed rate to the English landlords or planters, as they were called. This system is called the plantation system. The conditions forced on the tenants

were so hard that it was very difficult for them to fulfil them. The British Government then came to the help of the planters, and passed special laws to force the poor tenants to cultivate indigo according to those conditions. By these laws, with their punishments, the tenants of these plantations became serfs and slaves of the planters in some respects. They were terrorized over by the agents of the indigo factories, for these English or Indian agents felt quite secure with the protection of the government. Often, when the price of indigo fell, it was far more profitable for the cultivator to grow something else, such as rice, but he was not permitted to do so. There was a great deal of trouble and misery for the cultivator, and at last, exasperated beyond measure, the worm turned. The peasantry rose against the planters and sacked a factory. They were crushed back into submission.

The lot of the Indian peasant grew steadily worse; he was exploited by everyone who came in contact with him, by tax-gatherer, and landlord, and *bania*, and the planter and his agent, and by the biggest *bania* of all, the British Government, acting either through the East India Company or directly. The destruction of cottage-industries; the driving of the unemployed artisan to the village; landlordism; the plantation system; heavy taxation on land resulting in exorbitant rent, cruelly collected; the forcing of the peasant to the *bania* money-lender, from whose iron grip he never escaped; innumerable ejections from the land for inability to pay rent or revenue in time; and, above all, the perpetual terrorism of policeman and tax-gatherer and landlord's agent and factory agent, which almost destroyed all spirit and soul that he possessed. What could be the result of all this but inevitable tragedy and frightful catastrophe?

Terrible famines occurred which wiped off millions of the population. And, strange to say, even when food was lacking and people were starving for the want of it, wheat and other food-grains were exported to foreign countries for the profit

of the rich traders. But the real tragedy was not the lack of food, for food could be brought by railway train from other parts of the country, but the lack of means to buy it. In 1861 there was a great famine in North India, especially in our province, and it is stated that over 8½ per cent of the population of the affected area died. Fifteen years later, in 1876, and for two years, there was another terrible famine in North and Central India as well as in South India. The United Provinces were again the worst sufferers, and also the Central Provinces and part of the Punjab. About 10,000,000 people died! Again, twenty years later, in 1896, more or less in this same unhappy area, there was another famine, more terrible than any other known in Indian history. This frightful visitation laid North and Central India low and crushed it utterly. In 1900 there was still another famine.

You have heard of Florence Nightingale, the brave Englishwoman who first organized efficient nursing of those wounded in war. As long ago as 1878, she wrote: "The saddest sight to be seen in the East—nay, probably in the world—is the peasant of our Eastern Empire." She referred to the "consequences of our laws" producing in "the most fertile country in the world, a grinding, chronic semi-starvation in many places where what is called famine does not exist."

Yes, there can be few sights that are sadder than the sunken eyes of our *kisans* with the hunted, hopeless look in them. What a burden our peasantry have carried these many years! All of us, foreigner and Indian, have sought to exploit that long-suffering *kisan* and have mounted on his back. Is it surprising that his back breaks?

But, at long last, there came a glimmering of hope for him, a whisper of better times and lighter burdens. A little man came who looked straight into his eyes, and deep down into his shrunken heart, and sensed his long agony. And there was magic in that look, and a fire in his touch, and in his voice there was understanding and a yearning and abound-

ing love and faithfulness unto death. And when the peasant and the worker and all who were down-trodden saw him and heard him, their dead hearts woke to life and thrilled, and a strange hope rose in them, and they shouted with joy: "*Mahatma Gandhi ki jai*," and they prepared to march out of their valley of suffering. But the old machine that had crushed them for so long would not let them go easily. It moved again and produced new weapons, new laws and ordinances, to crush them, new chains to bind them. And then?—that is no part of my tale or history. That is still part of to-morrow, and when to-morrow becomes to-day, we shall know. But who doubts?

## 24. HOW BRITAIN RULED INDIA

I have already written on India in the nineteenth century. It is a long story and a long agony. I am perhaps paying more attention to this period of India's story than I have paid to other countries or other periods. That is not unnatural. Being an Indian, I am more interested in it, and knowing more about it, I can write more fully. Besides, this period has something much more than a historical interest for us. Modern India, such as we find her to-day, was formed and took shape in this travail of the nineteenth century. If we are to understand India as she is, we must know something of the forces that went to make her or mar her.

Reading of the deeds and misdeeds of the British in India, you will sometimes feel angry at the policy they have pursued and the widespread misery that has resulted from it. But whose fault was it that this happened? Was it not due to our own weakness and ignorance? Weakness and folly are always invitations to despotism.



The tyranny of the British, we say. Whose tyranny is it, after all? Who profits by it? Not the whole British race, for millions of them are themselves unhappy and oppressed. And undoubtedly there are small groups and classes of Indians who have profited a little by the British exploitation of India. Where are we to draw the line, then? It is not a question of individuals, but that of a system. We have been living under a huge machine that has exploited and crushed India's millions. This machine is the machine of the new imperialism, the outcome of industrial capitalism. The profits of this exploitation go largely to England, but in England they go almost entirely to certain classes. Some part of the profits of exploitation remain in India also, and certain classes benefit by them. It is therefore foolish for us to get angry with individuals, or even with the British as a whole. If a system is wrong and injures us, it has to be changed. It makes little difference who runs it, and even good people are helpless in a bad system. With the best will in the world, you cannot convert stones and earth into good food, however much you may cook them. So it is, I think, with imperialism and capitalism. They cannot be improved; the only real improvement is to do away with them altogether.

I have told you of the advanced stage of Indian cottage-industries when the British came. With natural progress in the methods of production, and without any intervention from outside, it is probable that some time or other machine-industry would have come to India. There was iron and coal in the country and, as we saw in England, these helped the new industrialism greatly, and indeed partly brought it about. Ultimately this would have happened in India also. There might have been some delay in this, owing to the chaotic political conditions. The British, however, intervened. They represented a country and a community which had already changed over to the new big machine production. One might think, therefore, that they would favour such a change in

India also, and encourage that class in India which was most likely to bring it about. They did no such thing. Indeed, they did the very opposite of this. Treating India as a possible rival, they broke up her industries, and actually discouraged the growth of machine-industry.

Thus we find a somewhat remarkable state of affairs in India. We find that the British, the most advanced people in Europe at the time, ally themselves in India with the most backward and conservative classes. They bolster up a dying feudal class; they create landlords; they support the hundreds of dependent Indian rulers in their semi-feudal states. They actually strengthen feudalism in India. Yet these British had been the pioneers in Europe of the middle-class or *bourgeois* revolution which had given their Parliament power; they had also been the pioneers in the Industrial Revolution which had resulted in introducing industrial capitalism to the world.

It is not difficult to understand why the British acted in this way in India. The whole basis of capitalism is cut-throat competition and exploitation, and imperialism is an advanced stage of this. So the British, having the power, killed their actual rivals and deliberately prevented the growth of other rivals. They could not possibly make friends with the masses, for the whole object of their presence in India was to exploit them. The interests of the exploiters and the exploited could never be the same. So they, the British, fell back on the relics of feudalism which India still possessed. These had little real strength left even when the British came; but they were propped up and given a small share in the exploitation of the country. This propping up could only give temporary relief to a class which had outlived its utility; when the props were removed they were sure to fall or adapt themselves to the new conditions. There were as many as 700 Indian States, big and small, depending on the good-will of the British.

British rule also helped religious conservatism. This sounds strange, for the British claimed to profess Christianity, and

yet their coming made Hinduism and Islam in India more rigid. To some extent this reaction was natural, as foreign invasion tends to make the religions and culture of the country protect themselves by rigidity. It was in this way that Hinduism had become rigid and caste had developed after the Muslim invasions. Now, both Hinduism and Islam reacted after this fashion. But, apart from this, the British Government in India actually—both deliberately and unconsciously—helped the conservative elements in the two religions. The British were not interested in religion or in conversions; they were out to make money. They were afraid of interfering in any way in religious matters lest the people, in their anger, rose against them. So to avoid even the suspicion of interference, they went so far as actually to protect and help the country's religions, or rather the external forms of religion. The result often was that the outer form remained, but there was little inside it.

This fear of irritating the orthodox people made the government side with them in matters of reform. Thus the cause of reform was held up. An alien government can seldom introduce social reform, because every change it seeks to introduce is resented by the people. Hinduism and Hindu law were in many respects changing and progressive, though the progress had been remarkably slow in recent centuries. Hindu law itself is largely custom, and customs change and grow. This elasticity of the Hindu law disappeared under the British and gave place to rigid legal codes drawn up after consultation with the most orthodox people. Thus the growth of Hindu society, slow as it was, was stopped. The Muslims resented the new conditions even more, and retired into their shells.

A great deal of credit is taken by the British for the abolition of what is (rather incorrectly) called *sati*, the practice of a Hindu widow burning herself on the funeral pyre of her husband. They deserve some credit for this, but as a

matter of fact the government only took action after many years of agitation by Indian reformers headed by Raja Ram Mohan Roy. Previous to them other rulers, and especially the Marathas, had forbidden it; the Portuguese Albuquerque had abolished the practice in Goa. It was put down by the British as a result of Indian agitation and Christian missionary endeavours. So far as I can remember, this was the only reform of religious significance which was brought about by the British Government.

So the British allied themselves with all the backward and conservative elements in the country. And they tried to make India a purely agricultural country producing raw materials for their industries. To prevent factories growing up in India they actually put a duty on machinery entering India. Owing to the duty on machinery, which was not taken off until 1860, the cost of building a factory in India was four times that of building it in England, although labour was far cheaper in India. This policy of obstruction could only delay matters; it could not stop the inevitable march of events. About the middle of the century machine-industry began to grow in India. The jute industry began in Bengal with British capital. The coming of the railways helped the growth of industry, and after 1880 cotton-mills, largely with Indian capital, grew up in Bombay and Ahmedabad. Then came mining. Except for the cotton-mills, this slow industrialization was very largely done with British capital. And all this was almost in spite of the government. The government talked of the *laissez-faire* policy, of allowing matters to take their own course, of not interfering with private initiative. The British Government had interfered with Indian trade in England and crushed it with duties and prohibitions when this was a rival in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Having got on top, they could afford to talk of *laissez-faire*. As a matter of fact, however, they were not merely indifferent. They actually discouraged certain Indian

industries, especially the growing cotton industry of Bombay and Ahmedabad. A tax or duty was put on the products of these Indian mills; it was called the excise duty on cotton. The object of this was to help British cotton goods from Lancashire to compete with Indian textiles.

In this way modern industry grew slowly in India. The richer classes in India cried out more and more for industrial development. It was only as late, I think, as 1905 that the government created a department of Commerce and Industry, but even so, little was done by it till the World War came. This growth of industrial conditions created a class of industrial workers who worked in the city factories.

The workers in the factories soon found that the slightly higher wage did not go very far. Everything cost more in the cities; altogether the cost of living was much higher. The places where they had to live were wretched hovels, filthy, damp and dark and insanitary. Their working conditions were also bad. In the village they had often starved, but they had had their fill of the sun and of fresh air. There was no fresh air and little sun for the factory-worker. His wages were not enough to meet the higher cost of living. Even women and children had to work long hours. Mothers with babes in their arms took to drugging their babies so that they might not interfere with work. Such were the miserable conditions under which these industrial workers worked in the factories. They were unhappy, of course, and discontent grew. Sometimes, in very despair, they had a strike—that is, they stopped work. But they were weak and feeble, and could easily be crushed by their wealthy employers, backed often by the government. Very slowly and after bitter experience they learnt the value of joint action. They formed trade unions.

In 1858, the British Parliament took direct charge [of India and] later the English King, or rather Queen, became Kaiser-i-Hind. In India there was the Governor-General, who be-

came a Viceroy also, at the top, and under him were crowds of officials. The States under Indian rulers were supposed to be half-independent, but as a matter of fact they were wholly dependent on the British. An English official, called the Resident, lived in each of the larger States, and he exercised general control over the administration. He was not interested in internal reform, and it mattered little to him how bad or old-fashioned the government of the State was. What he was interested in was in strengthening British authority in the State.

About a third of India was divided up into these States. The remaining two-thirds were under the direct government of the British. These two-thirds were therefore called British India. All the high officials in British India were British, except towards the end of the century, when a few Indians crept in. Even so all power and authority of course remained with the British. These high officials, apart from the military, were members of what is called the Indian Civil Service. The whole government of India was thus controlled by this service, the I.C.S. Such a government by officials, who appoint each other and are not responsible for what they do to the people, is called a bureaucracy, from the word bureau, an office.

We hear a great deal about this I.C.S. They have been a curious set of persons. They were efficient in some ways. They organized the government, strengthened British rule, and incidentally, profited greatly by it themselves. All the departments of government which helped in consolidating British rule and in collecting taxes were efficiently organized. Other departments were neglected. Not being appointed by, or responsible to, the people, the I.C.S. paid little attention to these other departments which concerned the people most. As was natural under the circumstances, they became arrogant and overbearing and contemptuous of public opinion. Narrow and limited in outlook, they began to look upon

themselves as the wisest people on earth. The good of India meant to them primarily the good of their own service. They formed a kind of mutual admiration society and were continually praising each other. Unchecked power and authority inevitably lead to this, and the Indian Civil Service were practically masters of India. The British Parliament was too far away to interfere and, in any event, it had no occasion to interfere, as they served its interests and the interests of British industry.

And yet the Indian Civil Service has had many good and honest and capable people in it. But they could not change the drift of policy or divert the current which was dragging India along. The I.C.S. were, after all, the agents of the industrial and financial interests in England, who were chiefly interested in exploiting India.

This bureaucratic government of India grew efficient wherever its own interests and the interests of British industry were concerned. But education and sanitation and hospitals and the many other activities which go to make a healthy and progressive nation were neglected. For many years there was no thought of these. The old village schools died away. Then slowly and grudgingly a little start was made. This start in education was also brought about by their own needs. The British people filled all the high offices, but obviously they could not fill the smaller offices and the clerkships. Clerks were wanted, and it was to produce clerks that schools and colleges were first started by the British. Ever since then this has been the main purpose of education in India; and most of its products are only capable of being clerks. But soon the supply of clerks was greater than the demand in government and other offices. Many were left over, and these formed a new class of educated unemployed.

Bengal took the lead in this new English education, and therefore the early supply of clerks was very largely Bengali. In 1857 three universities were started—in Calcutta, Bombay,

and Madras. A fact worth noticing is that the Muslims did not take kindly to the new education. They were thus left behind in the race for clerkships and government service. Later this became one of their grievances.

Another fact worth noticing is that even when the government made a start with education, girls were completely ignored. This is not surprising. The education given was meant to produce clerks, and men-clerks were wanted, and only they were available then, owing to backward social customs. So girls were wholly neglected, and it was long afterwards when some little beginning was made for them.

## 25. THE REAWAKENING OF INDIA

But one great benefit the English did confer on India. The very impact of their new and vigorous life shook up India and brought about a feeling of political unity and nationality. Perhaps such a shock, painful as it was, was needed to rejuvenate our ancient country and people. English education, intended to produce clerks, also put Indians in touch with current western thought. A new class began to arise, the English-educated class, small in numbers and cut off from the masses, but still destined to take the lead in the new nationalist movements. This class, at first, was full of admiration for England and the English ideas of liberty.

The impact of western ideas on India had its effect on Hindu religion also to some extent. The masses were not affected and the British Government's policy actually helped the orthodox people. But the new middle class that was arising, consisting of government servants and professional people, were affected. Early in the nineteenth century an attempt to reform Hinduism on western lines took place in Bengal.



Of course Hinduism had had innumerable reformers in the past. But the new attempt was definitely influenced by Christianity and western thought. The maker of this attempt was Raja Ram Mohan Roy, a great man and a great scholar, whose name we have come across already in connection with the abolition of *sati*. He knew Sanskrit and Arabic and many other languages well, and he carefully studied various religions. He was opposed to religious ceremonies and *pujas* and the like, and he pleaded for social reform and women's education. The society he founded was called the *Brahmo Samaj*. It was a small organization, and it has been confined to the English-knowing people of Bengal. But it has had considerable influence on the life of Bengal. The Tagore family took to it, and for long the poet Rabindranath's father, known as Maharshi Debendra Nath Tagore, was the prop and pillar of the *Samaj*.

Later in the century another religious reform movement took place. This was in the Punjab, and the founder was Swami Dayananda Saraswati. Another society was started, called the *Arya Samaj*. This also rejected many of the later growths of Hinduism and combated caste. Its cry was "Back to the *Vedas*." Although it was a reforming movement, influenced no doubt by Muslim and Christian thought, it was in essence an aggressive militant movement. And so it happened, curiously, that the *Arya Samaj* which, of many Hindu sects, probably came nearest to Islam, became a rival and opponent of Islam. It was an attempt to convert the defensive and static Hinduism into an aggressive missionary religion. It was meant to revive Hinduism. What gave the movement some strength was a colouring of nationalism. It was, indeed, Hindu nationalism raising its head. And the very fact that it was Hindu nationalism made it difficult for it to become Indian nationalism.

The *Arya Samaj* was far more widespread than the *Brahmo Samaj*, especially in the Punjab. But it was largely confined

to the middle classes. The *Samaj* has done a great deal of educational work, and has started many schools and colleges, both for boys and girls.

Another remarkable religious man of the century was Ramakrishna Paramhansa. He did not start any aggressive society for reform. He laid stress on service, and the *Ramakrishna Sevashrams* in many parts of the country are carrying on this tradition of service of the weak and poor. A famous disciple of Ramakrishna's was Swami Vivekananda, who very eloquently and forcibly preached the gospel of nationalism. This was not in any way anti-Muslim or anti anyone else, nor was it the somewhat narrow nationalism of the *Arya Samaj*. None the less Vivekananda's nationalism was Hindu nationalism, and it had its roots in Hindu religion and culture.

Thus it is interesting to note that the early waves of nationalism in India in the nineteenth century were religious and Hindu. The Muslims naturally could take no part in this Hindu nationalism. They kept apart. Having kept away from English education, the new ideas affected them less, and there was far less intellectual ferment amongst them. Many decades later they began to come out of their shell, and then, as with the Hindus, their nationalism took the shape of a Muslim nationalism, looking back to Islamic traditions and culture, and fearful of losing these because of the Hindu majority. But this Muslim movement became evident much later, towards the end of the century.

Another interesting thing to note is that these reform and progressive movements in Hinduism and Islam tried to fit in, as far as possible, the new scientific and political ideas derived from the West with their old religious notions and habits. They were not prepared to challenge and examine fearlessly these old notions and habits; nor could they ignore the new world of science and political and social ideas which lay around them. So they tried to harmonize the two by trying to show that all modern ideas and progress could be traced

back to the old sacred books of their religions. This attempt was bound to end in failure. It merely prevented people from thinking straight. Instead of thinking boldly and trying to understand the new forces and ideas which were changing the world, they were oppressed by the weight of ancient habit and tradition. Instead of looking ahead and marching ahead, they were all the time furtively looking back. It is not easy to go ahead, if the head is always turned and looks back.

The English-educated class grew slowly in the cities, and at the same time a new middle class arose consisting of professional people—that is, lawyers and doctors and the like, and merchants and traders. There had been, of course, a middle class in the past, but this was largely crushed by the early British policy. The new *bourgeoisie*, or middle class, was a direct outcome of British rule; in a sense they were the hangers-on of this rule. They shared to a small extent in the exploitation of the masses; they took the crumbs that fell from the richly laden table of the British ruling classes. They were petty officials helping in the British administration of the country; many were lawyers assisting in the working of the law courts and growing rich by litigation; and there were merchants, the go-betweens of British trade and industry, who sold British goods for a profit or commission.

The great majority of these people of the new *bourgeoisie* were Hindus. This was due to their somewhat better economic condition, as compared to the Muslims, and also to their taking to English education, which was a passport to government service and the professions. The Muslims were generally poorer. Most of the weavers, who had gone to the wall on account of the British destruction of Indian industries, were Muslims.

As this *bourgeoisie* grew, their appetite also grew. They wanted to get on, to make more money, to have more posts in government service, more facilities for starting factories.

They found the British obstructing them in every path. All the high posts were monopolized by the British, and industry was run for the profit of the British. So they began agitating, and this was the origin of the new nationalist movement.

So stood India in 1914 when the World War broke out in Europe and ended the hundred-year period.

## 26. TROUBLE IN CHINA

[In 1860, the British and French destroyed] the wonderful Summer Palace of Peking. This was done, it is said, as a punishment for a Chinese violation of a flag of truce. It may have been true that some Chinese troops had been guilty of such an offence, but still the deliberate vandalism of the British and French almost passes one's comprehension. This was not the act of a few ignorant soldiers, but of the men in authority. Why do such things happen? The English and the French are civilized and cultured peoples, in many ways the leaders of modern civilization. And yet these people, who in private life are decent and considerate, forget all their civilization and decency in their public dealings and conflicts with other people. There seems to be a strange contrast between the behaviour of individuals to each other and the behaviour of nations. Children and boys and girls are taught not to be too selfish, to think of others, to behave properly. All our education is meant to teach us this lesson, and to a small extent we learn it. And then comes war, and we forget our old lesson, and the brute in us shows his face. So decent people behave like brutes.

This is so even when two kindred nations, like the French and Germans, fight each other. But it is far worse when different races are in conflict; when the European faces the

racess and peoples of Asia and Africa. The different races know little of each other, for each is a closed book to the other; and where there is ignorance there is no fellow-feeling. Racial hatred and bitterness increase, and when there is a conflict between two races, it is not only a political war, but something far worse—a racial war. This explains to some extent the horrors of the Indian Revolt of 1857, and the cruelty and vandalism of the dominant European Powers in Asia and Africa.

It all seems very sad and very silly. But where there is the domination of one nation over another, one people over another, one class over another, there is bound to be discontent and friction and revolt, and an attempt by the exploited nation or people or class to get rid of its exploiter. And this exploitation of one by another is the very basis of our present-day society, which is called capitalism, and out of which imperialism has emerged.

In the nineteenth century the big machines and industrial progress had made the western European nations and the United States of America wealthy and powerful. They began to think that they were the lords of the earth and that the other races were far inferior to them and must make way for them. Having gained some control over the forces of Nature, they became arrogant and overbearing to others. They forgot that civilized man must not only control Nature, but must also control himself. And so we see in this nineteenth century progressive races, ahead of others in many ways, often behaving in a manner which would put a backward savage to shame. This may perhaps help you to understand the behaviour of European races in Asia and Africa, not only in the last century, but even to-day.

Do not imagine that I am comparing the European races to ourselves or to other races to our advantage. Far from it. We all have our dark spots.

We shall go back to China now. The British and French

had given a demonstration of their might by destroying the Summer Palace. They followed this up by forcing China to ratify the old treaties and extorted fresh privileges out of her. In Shanghai the Chinese customs service was organized under foreign officials by the Chinese Government in accordance with these treaties. This was called the "Imperial Maritime Customs."

Meanwhile the Taiping Rebellion, which had enfeebled China and thus given an opportunity to the foreign Powers, was still dragging on. At last, in 1864, it was finally put down by a Chinese Governor, Li Hung Chang, who became a leading statesman of China.

While England and France extorted privileges and concessions out of China by terrorism, Russia in the north achieved a remarkable success by more peaceful methods. Only a few years before, Russia, hungry for the possession of Constantinople, had attacked Turkey in Europe. England and France were afraid of Russia's growing strength, and so they joined the Turks and defeated Russia in what is known as the Crimean War of 1854-56. Defeated in the west, Russia began to look towards the east, and had great success. China was persuaded by peaceful means to cede to Russia a province in the north-east, adjoining the sea, with the city and harbour of Vladivostok.

So matters stood in 1860. The great Chinese Empire of the Manchus, which by the end of the eighteenth century covered and dominated nearly half Asia, was now humbled and disgraced. Western Powers from distant Europe had defeated and humiliated it; an internal rebellion had almost upset the Empire. All this shook up China completely.

Having settled satisfactorily with Russia in central Asia, the Chinese Government soon had trouble in another part of their wide-flung but disintegrating empire. This was in Annam, which was a vassal State of China. The French had

designs on it, and there was fighting between China and France.

China was far from having turned the corner yet. There was still a great deal of humiliation and suffering and disruption in store for her. What was wrong with her was not merely the weakness of the army or navy, but something which went far deeper. Her whole social and economic structure was going to pieces. [It] was in a bad way early in the nineteenth century when many secret societies were formed against the Manchus. Foreign trade and the effects of contact with industrialized countries made matters worse. There were some local reforms by energetic officials here and there, especially by Li Hung Chang. But these could not touch the roots of the problem or cure the disease which enfeebled China.

Meanwhile, across the narrow seas, Japan was performing wonders and changing out of all recognition. To Japan, therefore, we must now go.

## 27. THE EMERGENCE OF JAPAN

From 1641, for over two hundred years, the people of Japan lived cut off from the rest of the world. These two hundred years saw great changes in Europe and Asia and America, and even in Africa. But no news of them reached this secluded nation; no breath from outside came to disturb the old-world feudal air of Japan. Almost it seemed as if the march of time and change had been stayed, and the mid-seventeenth century held captive. For though time rolled on, the picture seemed to remain the same. It was feudal Japan, with the landowning class in power. The Emperor had little power; the real ruler was the Shogun, the head of a great

clan. Like the Kshatriyas in India, there was a warrior class called the Samurai. The feudal lords and the Samurai were the ruling class. Often different lords and clans quarrelled with each other. But all of them joined in oppressing and exploiting the peasantry and all others.

Still, Japan had peace. After the long civil wars which had exhausted the country this peace was very welcome. Some of the great warring nobles—the Daimyos—were suppressed. Slowly Japan began to recover from the ravages of civil war. People's minds turned more to industry and art and literature and religion. Christianity had been suppressed; Buddhism revived, and later Shinto, which is a typical Japanese worship of ancestors. Confucius, the sage of China, became the ideal to be looked up to in matters of social behaviour and morals. Art flourished in the circles of the Court and the nobility. In some ways the picture was similar to that of the Middle Ages of Europe.

But it is not so easy to keep out change, and though outside contacts were stopped, inside Japan itself change worked, though more slowly than it might otherwise have done. As in other countries, the feudal order moved towards economic collapse. Discontent grew, and the Shogun, being at the head of affairs, became the target for this. The growth of Shinto-worship made people look more to the Emperor, who was supposed to be the direct descendant of the Sun. Thus a spirit of nationalism grew out of the prevailing discontents, and this spirit, based as it was on an economic breakdown, would have inevitably led to a change and the opening of Japan to the world.

Many attempts had been made by foreign Powers to open up Japan, but they had all failed. About the middle of the nineteenth century the United States of America became especially interested in this. They had just spread out to the west in California, and San Francisco was becoming an important port. The newly opened trade with China was in-



viting, but the journey across the Pacific was a long one. So they wanted to call at a Japanese port to break this long journey and take supplies. This was the reason for America's repeated attempts to open up Japan.

In 1853 an American squadron came to Japan with a letter from the American President.\* These were the first steamships seen in Japan. A year later the Shogun agreed to open two ports. The British, Russians and Dutch, learning of this, came soon after and also made similar treaties with the Shogun. So Japan was open again to the world after 213 years.

But there was trouble ahead. The Shogun had posed as the Emperor before the foreign Powers. He was no longer popular, and a great agitation rose against him and his foreign treaties. Some foreigners were also killed, and this resulted in a naval attack by the foreign Powers. The position became more and more difficult, and ultimately the Shogun was prevailed upon to resign his office in 1867. Thus ended the Tokugawa Shogunate which began with Iyeyasu in 1603. Not only that, but the whole system of the Shogunate, which had lasted for nearly seven hundred years, came to an end.

The new Emperor now came into his own. He was a boy of fourteen who had just succeeded to the throne as the Emperor Mutsihito. For forty-five years he reigned, from 1867 to 1912, and this period is known as the Meiji (or "enlightened rule") era. It was during his reign that Japan forged ahead, and, copying western nations, became their equal in many respects. This vast change brought about in a generation is remarkable and without parallel in history. Japan became a great industrial nation and, after the manner of the western Powers, an imperialistic and predatory nation. She bore all the outward signs of progress. In industry she even advanced beyond her teachers. Her population increased rap-

\* Commodore Matthew Galbraith Perry presented a letter from President Millard Fillmore on July 14, 1853, to representatives of the Japanese Emperor. This date marks the opening of Japan to Western influence.

idly. Her ships went round the globe. She became a great Power whose voice was heard with respect in international affairs. And yet all this mighty change did not go very deep down into the heart of the nation. It would be wrong to call the changes superficial, for they were far more than that. But the outlook of the rulers still remained feudal, and they sought to combine radical reform with this feudal shell. They seemed to succeed to a large extent.

The people who were responsible for these great changes in Japan were a band of far-seeing men of the nobility—the “Elder Statesmen” they were called. When the anti-foreign riots in Japan were followed by bombardment by the foreign warships, the Japanese saw their helplessness and felt bitterly humiliated. Instead of cursing their fate and tearing their hair, they decided to learn a lesson from this defeat and degradation. The Elder Statesmen chalked out a programme of reform and they adhered to it.

All this was done by the Elder Statesmen in the name of the Emperor, who in spite of the new Parliament and all else, remained in law the absolute ruler of the Japanese Empire. And at the same time as they pushed ahead these reforms, they spread the cult of emperor-worship. It was a strange combination: factories and modern industry and a semblance of parliamentary government on the one side, and a medieval worship of the divine Emperor on the other. The Elder Statesmen utilized this great feeling of reverence for the Emperor in two ways. They forced the reforms on the conservative and feudal classes who would otherwise have resisted them but were cowed down by the prestige of the Emperor’s name; and they held back the more progressive elements who wanted to go faster and get rid of all feudalism.

The contrast between China and Japan during this last half of the nineteenth century is remarkable. Japan rapidly westernized herself; China, as we have seen and shall see even more later on, got involved in the most extraordinary difficulties.

Why did this happen? The very vastness of China, her great population and area, made change difficult. India also suffers from this seeming source of strength—huge area and population. China's government also was not sufficiently centralized—that is to say, each part of the country had a great deal of self-government. It was thus not easy for the central government to interfere and bring about big changes as had been done in Japan. Then again, China's great civilization had grown up in thousands of years and was too closely interwoven with her life to be easily discarded. Again we can compare India to China. Japan, on the other hand, had borrowed Chinese civilization and could more easily replace it. Another reason for China's difficulties was the continual interference of European Powers. China was a great continental country. She could not shut herself up, as the islands of Japan had done. Russia touched her territories to the north and north-west; the British Empire in the south-west; France was creeping up in the south. These European Powers had managed to extort important privileges from China and had developed great commercial interests. These interests gave them plenty of excuses for interference.

So Japan shot ahead, while China was still blindly struggling on and trying, with little success, to adapt herself to the new conditions. And yet there is another strange fact worth noticing. Japan took to western machinery and industry and, with a modern army and navy, put on the garb of an advanced industrialized Power. But she did not take so readily to the new thought and ideas of Europe; to notions of individual and social freedom; to a scientific outlook on life and society. At heart she remained feudal and authoritarian and tied up to a strange emperor-worship which the rest of the world had long outgrown. The passionate and self-sacrificing patriotism of the Japanese was closely allied to this loyalty to the Emperor. Nationalism and the cult of the divine Emperor went side by side. China, on the other hand, did not

take readily to big machinery and industry; but the Chinese, or at any rate modern China, welcomed western thought and ideas and the scientific outlook. These were not so far removed from their own. Thus we see that although modern China entered more into the spirit of western civilization, Japan outstripped her because she put on the armour of it, ignoring the spirit. And all Europe praised Japan because she was strong in this armour, and they made her one of their fellowship. But China was weak and unprovided with Maxim guns and the like. So they insulted her and preached to her and exploited her, caring little for her thought and ideas.

Japan not only followed Europe in industrial methods, but also in imperialistic aggression. She was more than a faithful pupil of the European Powers: she often improved on them. Her real difficulty was the discordance between the new industrialism and the old feudalism. In her attempts to carry on with both she could not establish economic equilibrium. Taxation was very heavy, and people grumbled. To prevent trouble at home she had recourse to an old device—distracting attention by war and imperialistic adventures abroad. Her new industries also forced her to look to other countries for raw materials and markets, just as the Industrial Revolution had forced England, and later other western European Powers, to look abroad and conquer. Production increased and there was a rapid growth of population. More and more food and raw materials were required. Where was she to get them? Her nearest neighbours were China and Korea. China offered opportunities for trade, but she was a thickly populated country. In Manchuria, however, which formed the north-eastern provinces of the Chinese Empire, there was plenty of elbow-room for development and colonization. So to Korea and Manchuria, Japan looked hungrily.

Japan also saw with concern the western Powers getting all manner of privileges from China, and even trying to get territory. If these Powers became well established on the

mainland opposite to her, her safety might be imperilled and, at any rate, her growth on the continent would be checked.

In less than twenty years after her opening to the outer world, Japan began to be aggressive towards China. A petty dispute about some fishermen, who had been shipwrecked and were murdered, gave Japan an opportunity to demand compensation from China. China refused at first, but then, threatened with war and occupied at the time with the French in Annam, she gave in to Japan. This was in 1874. Japan was elated by this triumph and immediately looked round for further conquests. Korea seemed inviting and, picking a quarrel with her for some petty reason, Japan invaded her and forced her to pay a sum of money and to open some ports for Japanese trade.

Korea had long been a vassal State of China. She looked to China for support, but China was unable to help. The Chinese Government, fearing that Japan might acquire too much influence, advised Korea to give in for the moment and also to make treaties with the western Powers to checkmate Japan. So Korea was thrown open to the world by 1882. But Japan was not going to be satisfied with this. Taking advantage of China's difficulties, she again raised the Korean question and made China agree to a joint protectorate over Korea—that is, poor Korea became a vassal State of both. This was obviously a most unsatisfactory state of affairs for all concerned. There was bound to be trouble. Japan, indeed, wanted trouble, and in 1894 she forced a war on China.

The Sino-Japanese War of 1894–95 was a runaway affair for Japan. Her army and navy were up to date; the Chinese were still old-fashioned and inefficient. Japan won all along the line, and forced a treaty on China which put her on the same level as the western treaty Powers. Korea was declared independent, but this was only a veil for Japanese control. China was also forced to give to Japan the Liaotung peninsula

in Manchuria, with Port Arthur, as well as Formosa and some other islands.

This crushing defeat of China by little Japan surprised the world. The western Powers were by no means pleased at this rise of a powerful country in the Far East. Even during the Sino-Japanese War, when Japan was seen to be winning, she was warned by these Powers that they would not consent to Japan annexing any part of China's mainland. In spite of this warning she took the Liaotung peninsula with an important port—Port Arthur. But she was not allowed to keep this. Three great Powers—Russia, Germany and France—insisted on her giving it up, and, much to her annoyance and anger, she had to do so. She was not strong enough to face these three.

But Japan remembered this slight upon her. It rankled and made her prepare for a greater struggle. Nine years later this struggle came with Russia.

Meanwhile Japan, by her victory over China, had established her position as the strongest nation of the Far East. China had appeared in all her weakness, and all fear of her vanished from the western Powers. They swooped down on her like vultures on a dead or dying body, and tried to get as much as possible for themselves. France, Russia, England, and Germany—all scrambled for seaports on the China coast and for privileges. There was an unholy and a most unseemly battle for concessions. Every little thing was made an excuse for claiming additional privileges or concessions. Because two missionaries were killed, Germany seized by force Kiauchau in the Shantung peninsula in the east. Because Germany took this, the other Powers insisted on their share of the booty. Russia took Port Arthur, of which she had deprived Japan three years previously. England took Wei-hai-wei to set off Russia's possession of Port Arthur. France took a port and territory in Annam. Russia also got permission to build a

railway across North Manchuria, an extension of the Trans-Siberian railway.

It was extraordinary—this shameless scramble. Of course China did not enjoy parting with territory or granting concessions. She was forced to agree on every occasion by displays of naval force and threats of bombardment. What shall we call this scandalous behaviour? Highway robbery? Brigandage? It is the way of imperialism. Sometimes it works in secret; sometimes it covers its evil deeds under a cloak of pious sentiment and hypocritical pretence of doing good to others. But in China in 1898 there was no cloak or covering. The naked thing stood out in all its ugliness.

## 28. A LOOK AT WESTERN ASIA

We have so far considered only a part of Asia; the rest of the [Asiatic] world remains. You must remember that all these nineteenth-century events in different countries took place contemporaneously, influencing and reacting on each other. That is why the study of the history of one country by itself is very deceptive; only a world history can give us a right idea of the importance of events and forces that have shaped the past and made it into the present.

Western Asia is very different from Eastern Asia and from India. In the distant past, of course, many races and tribes came from Central Asia and the East and overran it. The Turks themselves came in this way. Before the Christian era Buddhism also spread right up to Asia Minor, but it does not appear to have taken root there. Western Asia has, during the ages, looked more towards Europe than towards Asia or the East. In a way it has been Asia's window to Europe.

Even the spread of Islam in various parts of Asia did not make much difference to the Western outlook.

India and China and the neighbouring countries never looked at Europe in this way. They were wrapped up in Asia. Between India and China there is a vast difference, in race and outlook and culture. China has never been the slave of religion and has not had any priestly hierarchy. India has always prided herself on her religion, and her society has been priest-ridden in spite of Buddha's attempts to rid her of this incubus. There are many other differences between India and China, and yet there is a strange unity between India and eastern and south-eastern Asia. This unity has been given by the thread of the Buddha legend which has bound these people together and woven many a common motive in art and literature and music and song.

Islam brought something of Western Asia into India. It was a different culture, a different outlook on life. But the Western Asian outlook did not come to India direct or in its natural garb, as it might have done if the Arabs had conquered India; it came, long afterwards, through the Central Asian races who were not its fittest representatives. None the less, Islam connected India with Western Asia, and India thus became the meeting-place of these two great cultures. Islam also went to China, and large numbers adopted it, but it never challenged the old culture of China. In India this challenge was made because Islam was for long the religion of the ruling class. India thus became the country where the two cultures faced each other, and I have already written to you of the many efforts to find a synthesis in order to solve this difficult problem. These efforts had largely succeeded, when a new danger and a new obstruction came in the shape of the British conquest. To-day both these cultures have lost their old meaning. Nationalism and industrialization have changed the world, and the ancient cultures can only survive to the extent they can fit themselves into the new economic



conditions. Their hollow shells remain; their real meaning has gone. In Western Asia, in the very homelands of Islam, vast changes are going on. China and the Far East are in a state of continuous upset.

I have read recently two books which have pleased me greatly, and which I should like to share with you. They are both by a Frenchman, René Grousset, who is the conservator or director of the Musée Guimet, in Paris, [a] delightful museum of Eastern, and especially Buddhist, art. M. Grousset has written a survey of Eastern—that is, Asiatic—civilizations in four volumes, dealing separately with India, the Middle East (which means Western Asia and Persia), China, and Japan. Being interested in Art, he has dealt with his subject from the point of view of the development of various kinds of artistic activity, and he has given large numbers of beautiful pictures. It is far better and more interesting to learn history in this way than by learning about wars and battles and the intrigues of kings.

I have read only two of M. Grousset's volumes so far, those dealing with India and the Middle East, and they have delighted me. The pictures of fine buildings and noble statuary and wonderful frescoes and paintings have carried me far from Dehra Dun Gaol to distant countries and times long past.

Mohenjo Daro and Harappa in the Indus Valley in north-west India [are] the ruins of the ancient civilization which flourished five thousand years ago. In those days when people lived and worked and played in Mohenjo Daro there were many other centres of civilization. Our information is slight; it is limited to certain ruins that have been discovered in various parts of Asia and in Egypt. Perhaps if we dig hard enough and widely enough we may find many more such ruins. But already we know of a high civilization in those days in the Nile Valley in Egypt; in Chaldea (Mesopotamia), where Susa was the capital of the State of Elam; in Persepolis in

eastern Persia; in Turkestan in Central Asia; and by the Yellow River or Hoang-Ho in China.

This was the period when copper was beginning to be used, the age of polished stone was passing. All over these wide areas from Egypt to China about the same stage of growth seems to have been reached. Indeed, it is surprising to find some proofs of a common civilization spreading right across Asia, which show that the different centres were not isolated, but were in touch with each other. Agriculture flourished and domestic animals were kept and there was some trade. The art of writing had appeared, but these old picture-writings have not yet been deciphered. Similar tools are found in widely separated areas, and the artistic products are also remarkably similar. Painted pottery, beautiful vases with all manner of designs and decorations, attract special notice. This pottery is so much in evidence that this whole period has been named the "painted pottery civilization." There was gold and silver jewellery, also alabaster and marble vessels, and even cotton fabrics. Each of these centres of early civilization from Egypt to the Indus Valley and to China had something special to itself and carried on independently, and yet the thread of a common and a connected civilization seems to run through them.

This was, roughly, five thousand years ago. But it is clear that such a civilization was relatively advanced, and must have taken some thousands of years to develop. In the Nile Valley and in Chaldea it can be traced back for at least another two thousand years, and probably the other centres are equally old.

Out of this common and widespread civilization of the early Copper Age, the Mohenjo Daro period of about 3000 B.C., the four great Eastern civilizations diverge and differentiate and develop separately. These four were the Egyptian, the Mesopotamian, the Indian, and the Chinese. It was during this latter period that the Great Pyramids were built in Egypt

and the great Sphinx at Gizeh. Later still came the Theban period in Egypt, when the Theban Empire flourished there, about 2000 B.C., and wonderful statues and frescoes were produced. This was a great period of a renaissance of art. The huge temple of Luxor was built about this time. Tutankhamen, whose name everybody seems to know without knowing anything else about him, was one of the Theban Pharaohs.

In Chaldea powerful organized States arose in two regions, Sumer and Akkad. The famous city of Ur of the Chaldees was already producing artistic masterpieces in the days of Mohenjo Daro. After about seven hundred years of lordship, Ur was overthrown. The Babylonians, who were a Semitic people (that is, like the Jews or Arabs) coming from Syria, became the new rulers. The city of Babylon now became the centre of a new empire to which there is frequent reference in the Bible. There was a revival of literature during this period, and epic poems were written and sung. These epic poems describing the beginning of the world and a mighty deluge are supposed to be the stories round which the earlier chapters of the Bible are written.

Then Babylon fell, and many centuries afterwards (about 1000 B.C. and onwards) the Assyrians come on the scene and establish an empire with Nineveh as capital. These people were most extraordinary. They were brutal and cruel beyond measure. Their whole system of government was based on terrorism, and with massacre and destruction they built a great empire all over the Middle East. They were the imperialists of those days. And yet these people were highly cultured in some ways. An enormous library was collected at Nineveh, every department of current knowledge being represented. The library was not a paper one, I need hardly tell you, nor did it have anything like the modern book. The books of those days were on tablets. Thousands of these tablets from the old library at Nineveh are at present in the British Museum in London. Some of them are pretty ghastly;

the monarch gives a vivid description of his cruelty to his enemies and how he enjoyed it.

In India the Aryans came after the Mohenjo Daro period. No ruins or statuary of their early days have yet been discovered, but their greatest monuments are their old books—the *Vedas* and others—which give us an insight into the minds of these happy warriors who came down to the Indian plains. These books are full of powerful Nature-poetry; the very gods are Nature-gods. It was natural that when art developed, this love of Nature should play a great part in it. The Sanchi gates, which are situated near Bhopal, are among the earliest artistic remains discovered. They date from the early Buddhist period, and the beautiful carvings on these gates, of flowers and leaves and animal forms, tell us of the love and understanding of Nature of the artists who made them.

And then from the north-west came Greek influence, for you will remember that after Alexander the Hellenic empires came up to the Indian frontier; and later on there was the borderland empire of the Kushans, which was also under Hellenic influence. Buddha was against image-worship. He did not call himself a god or ask to be worshipped. He wanted to rid society of the evils which priestcraft had brought into it; he was a reformer trying to raise the fallen and the unhappy. "I have come," he said, in his first sermon at Isipatana or Sarnath, near Benares, "I have come to satisfy the ignorant with wisdom. . . . The perfect man is nothing unless he spends himself in benefits to living beings, unless he consoles those who are abandoned. . . . My doctrine is a doctrine of pity; that is why the happy ones of the world find it hard. The way to salvation is open to all. The Brahman came forth from the womb of a woman even as the Chandala to whom he closes the way to salvation. Annihilate your passions as the elephant overturns a hut made of reeds. . . . The only remedy against evil is sane reality." So Buddha taught the way of good conduct and the way of life. But, as is the way

with foolish disciples who do not understand the inner meaning of the master, many of his followers observed the external rules of conduct that he had prescribed and did not appreciate their inner significance. Instead of following his advice they worshipped him. Still no statues of the Buddha rose, no images of him were made.

Then came ideas from Greece and other Hellenic countries, and in these countries beautiful statues of the gods were made, and these were worshipped. In Gandhara, on the north-west of India, this influence was greatest, and the Buddha infant appeared in sculpture. Like their own little and charming god Cupid he was, or as later the infant Christ was to be—the “*sacro bambino*,” as the Italians call him. In this way image-worship began in Buddhism, and it developed till statues of Buddha were to be found in every Buddhist temple.

Iranian or Persian influence also affected Indian art. The Buddha legends and the rich mythology of the Hindus provided inexhaustible material for India's artists, and at Amara-vati in the Andhradesh, in the Elephanta caves near Bombay, at Ajanta and Ellore, and many other places, you can trace these old legends and myths in stone and paint. Wonderfully worth visiting are these places.

The Indian legends travelled across the seas to Farther India. In Java, at Borobudur, there is the whole Buddha story in a series of remarkable frescoes in stone. In the ruins of Angkor Vat there are still many beautiful statues which remind us of the days eight hundred years ago when the city was known in Eastern Asia as “Angkor the Magnificent.” The faces of these statues are gentle and full of life, and there hovers over most of them a strange and elusive smile which has come to be known as the “Smile of Angkor.” This smile persists though the racial type changes, and it never grows monotonous.

Art is a faithful mirror of the life and civilization of a period. When Indian civilization was full of life, it created

things of beauty and the arts flourished, and its echoes reached distant countries. But, as you know, stagnation and decay set in, and as the country went to pieces the arts fell with it. They lost vigour and life and became overburdened with detail, and sometimes even grotesque. The coming of the Muslims gave a shock and brought new influences which rid the degraded forms of Indian art of over-ornamentations. The old Indian ideal remained at the back, but it was dressed up simply and gracefully in the new garments from Arabia and Persia. In the past, thousands of Indian master-builders had gone from India to Central Asia. Now the architects and painters came from western Asia to India. In Persia and Central Asia an artistic renaissance had taken place; in Constantinople great architects were putting up mighty buildings. This was also the period of the early Renaissance in Italy, when a galaxy of great masters produced beautiful paintings and statues.

Sinan was the famous Turkish architect of the day, and Babar sent for his favourite pupil, Yusuf. In Iran Bihzad was the great painter, and Akbar sent for several of his pupils and made them his Court painters. Persian influence became dominant both in architecture and painting. The greatest triumph of this Indo-Persian art is the Taj Mahal. Many great artists helped to make it. It is said that the principal architect was a Turk or Persian named Ustad Isa, and that he was assisted by Indian architects. Some European artists, and especially an Italian, are supposed to have worked at the interior decoration. In spite of so many different masters working at it, there is no jarring or contradictory element in it. All the different influences are blended together to produce a wonderful harmony. Many people worked at the Taj, but the two influences which are predominant are the Persian and the Indian, and M. Grousset therefore calls it "the soul of Iran incarnate in the body of India."

## 29. LET US NOW GO TO PERSIA

Let us go now to Persia, the country whose soul is said to have come to India and found a worthy body in the Taj Mahal. Persian Art has a remarkable tradition. This tradition has persisted for over two thousand years—ever since the days of the Assyrians. There have been changes of governments and dynasties and religion, the country has been under foreign rule and under its own kings, Islam has come and revolutionized much, but this tradition has persisted. Of course it has changed and developed in the course of ages. This persistence, it is said, is due to the connection of Persian Art with the soil and scenery of Persia.

The Assyrian Empire of Nineveh included Persia. About five hundred or six hundred years before Christ, the Iranians, who were Aryans, captured Nineveh and put an end to the Assyrian Empire. The Persian-Aryans then built for themselves a great empire from the banks of the Indus right up to Egypt. They dominated the ancient world, and their ruler is often referred to in Greek accounts as the "Great King." Cyrus, Darius, Xerxes are the names of some of these "Great Kings." You may remember that Darius and Xerxes tried to conquer Greece, and suffered defeat. This dynasty is called the Achæmenid dynasty. For two hundred and twenty years it ruled a vast empire till Alexander the Great of Macedon put an end to it.

The Persians must have come as a great relief after the Assyrians and the Babylonians. They were civilized and tolerant masters, allowing different religions and cultures to flourish. The huge empire was well administered, and there was a network of good roads to facilitate communications from all parts. These Persians were closely related to the

Indo-Aryans, those who had come to India. Their religion—that of Zoroaster or Zarathushtra—was related to the early Vedic religion. It seems clear that both had a common origin in the early home of the Aryans, wherever this may have been.

The Achæmenid kings were great builders. In their capital city of Persepolis they built huge palaces—they did not build temples—with vast halls supported by numerous columns. Some ruins can still give an idea of these enormous structures. Achæmenid art seems to have kept contact with Indian art of the Mauryan period (Ashoka, etc.), and influenced it.

Alexander defeated the "Great King" Darius and ended the Achæmenid dynasty. There followed a brief period of Greek rule under Seleucus (who had been Alexander's general) and his successors, and a much longer period of Hellenic influence under semi-foreign rulers. The Kushans sitting on the Indian borderland and stretching out south to Benares and north in Central Asia were contemporaries, and they also were under Hellenic influence. Thus the whole of Asia west of India was under Greek influence for more than five hundred years after Alexander, right up to the third century after Christ. This influence was largely artistic. It did not interfere with the religion of Persia, which continued to be Zoroastrianism.

In the third century there was a national revival in Persia and a new dynasty came into power. This was the Sassanid dynasty, which was aggressively nationalistic and claimed to be the successor of the old Achæmenid kings. As usually happens with an aggressive nationalism, this was narrow and intolerant. It had to become so because it was wedged in between the Roman Empire and the Byzantine Empire of Constantinople on the west, and the advancing Turkish tribes on the east. Still, it managed to carry on for more than four hundred years, right up to the coming of Islam. The



Zoroastrian priesthood was all-powerful under the Sassanids, and their Church controlled the State and was intolerant of all opposition. It was during this period that the final version of their sacred book, the *Avestha*, is said to have been prepared.

In India at this time the Gupta Empire flourished, which was also a national revival after the Kushan and Buddhist periods. There was a renaissance of art and literature, and some of the greatest of Sanskrit writers, like Kalidasa, lived then. There are many indications that Persia of the Sassanids had artistic contacts with India of the Guptas. Few paintings or sculptures of the Sassanid period have remained to our day; such as have been found are full of life and movement, the animals being very similar to those in the Ajanta frescoes. Sassanid artistic influence seems to have extended right up to China and the Gobi desert.

Towards the end of their long rule the Sassanids became weak and Persia was in a bad way. After long warfare with the Byzantine Empire both were thoroughly exhausted. It was not difficult for the Arab armies, full of ardour for their new faith, to conquer Persia. By the middle of the seventh century, within ten years of the death of the Prophet Mohammad, Persia was under the rule of the Caliph. As Arab armies spread to Central Asia and North Africa they carried with them not only their new religion, but a young and growing civilization. Syria, Mesopotamia, Egypt were all absorbed by Arabic culture. The Arabic language became their language, and even racially they were assimilated. Baghdad, Damascus, Cairo became the great centres of Arabic culture, and many fine buildings arose there under the impetus of the new civilization. Even to-day all these countries are the Arabic countries and, though separated from each other, they dream of unity.

Persia was similarly conquered by the Arabs, but they could not absorb or assimilate the people as they had done

in Syria or Egypt. The Iranian race, being of the old Aryan stock, was further removed from the Semitic Arabs; their language was also an Aryan language. So the race remained apart and the language continued to flourish. Islam spread rapidly and displaced Zoroastrianism, which ultimately had to seek shelter in India. But even in Islam the Persians took their own line. There was a split, and two parties arose, two branches of Islam—the Shias and the Sunnis. Persia became, and still is, predominantly a Shia country, while the rest of the Islamic world is mostly Sunni.

But though Persia was not assimilated, Arab civilization had a powerful influence on her; and Islam, as in India, gave new life to artistic activity. Arab art and culture were equally affected by Persian standards. Persian luxury invaded the households of the simple children of the desert, and the Court of the Arab Caliph became as gorgeous and magnificent as any other imperial Court had been. Imperial Baghdad became the greatest city of the day. North of it in Samarra on the Tigris the Caliphs built for themselves an enormous mosque and palace, the ruins of which still exist. The mosque had vast halls and courtyards with fountains. The palace was a rectangle, of which one side was over a kilometre in length.

In the ninth century the Empire of Baghdad decayed and split up into a number of States. Persia became independent, and Turkish tribes from the East formed many States, eventually seizing Persia itself and dominating the nominal Caliph of Baghdad. Mahmud of Ghazni arose at the beginning of the eleventh century and raided India and threatened the Caliph, and built for himself a brief-lived empire, to be ended by another Turkish tribe, the Seljuqs. The Seljuqs faced and fought long, and with success, the Christian Crusaders, and their empire lasted for 150 years. Towards the end of the twelfth century yet another Turkish tribe drove out the Seljuqs from Persia and established the kingdom of Khwarism or Khiva. But this had a brief life, for Chengiz Khan, indig-

nant at the insult offered to his ambassador by the Shah of Khwarism, came with his Mongols and crushed the land and the people.

I have mentioned these ups and downs of dynasties and races to emphasize how the artistic tradition and life of Persia continued in spite of them. Tribe after tribe of Turks came from the East, and they succumbed to the mixed Perso-Arabian civilization which prevailed from Bokhara to Iraq. Those Turks who managed to reach Asia Minor, far from Persia, retained their own ways and refused to give in to Arabic culture. They made Asia Minor almost a bit of their native Turkestan. But in Persia and adjoining countries, such was the strength of the old Iranian culture that they accepted it and adapted themselves to it. Under all the various Turkish dynasties that ruled, Persian art and literature flourished. I have told you of the Persian poet Firdausi, who lived at the time of Sultan Mahmud of Ghazni. At Mahmud's request he wrote the great national epic of Persia, the *Shahnama*, and the scenes described in this book lie in pre-Islamic days, and the great hero is Rustam. This shows us how closely tied up were Persian art and literature with the old national and traditional past. Most of the subjects for Persian paintings and beautiful miniatures are taken from the stories of the *Shahnama*.

Firdausi lived at the turn of the century and the millennium, from 932 to 1021. Soon after him came a name famous in English as it is in Persian—Omar Khayyám, the astronomer-poet of Nishapur in Persia. And Omar was followed by Shiekh Sadi of Shiraz, one of the greatest of Persian poets, whose *Gulistan* and *Bustan* schoolboys in Indian *maktabs* have had to learn by heart for generations past.

I mention just a few names of the great. I wish you to realize that the lamp of Persian art and culture was shining brightly right through these centuries from Persia to Transoxiana in Central Asia. Great cities like Bokhara and Balkh of

Transoxiana rivalled the cities of Persia as centres of artistic and literary activity. It was at Bokhara that Ibn Sina or Avicenna, the most famous of Arab philosophers, was born at the end of the tenth century.\* It was in Balkh two hundred years later that another great Persian poet was born, Jalaluddin Rumi.\*\* He is considered a great mystic, and he founded the order of the dancing dervishes.

So in spite of war and conflict and political changes the tradition of Perso-Arabian art and culture continued to be a living one and produced many masterpieces in literature, painting and architecture. Then came disaster. In the thirteenth century (about 1220) Chengiz Khan swept down and destroyed Khwarism and Iran, and a few years later Hulagu destroyed Baghdad,\*\*\* and the accumulations of long centuries of high culture were swept away. The Mongols converted Central Asia almost into a wilderness, and its great cities were deserted and became almost devoid of human life.

Central Asia never fully recovered from this calamity; and it is surprising enough that it recovered to the extent it did. You may remember that after Chengiz Khan's death his vast empire was divided up. The part of it in Persia and round about fell to Hulagu, who, after having had his fill of destruction, settled down as a peaceful and tolerant ruler, and founded the dynasty of the Il-khans. These Il-khans for some time continued to profess the old Sky religion of the Mongols; later they were converted to Islam. Both before and after this conversion they were completely tolerant of other religions. Their cousins in China, the Great Khan and his family, were Buddhists, and with them they had the most intimate relations. They even sent for brides all the way from China.

\* In 980; and died in 1037.

\*\* He was born in 1207 and died in 1273.

\*\*\* Hulagu (1217-1265), the grandson of Chengiz (or Jenghis, or Chinjiz) Khan, sacked Baghdad in 1258.

These contacts between the two branches of the Mongols in Persia and China had considerable effect on art. Chinese influence crept into Persia and a curious blend of Arabic, Persian, and Chinese influence appears in the paintings. But again the Persian element, in spite of all disasters, triumphed. In the middle of the fourteenth century Persia produced another great poet, Hafiz, who is still popular even in India.

The Mongol Il-khans did not last long. Their last remnants were destroyed by another great warrior, Timur,\* of Samarqand in Transoxiana. This terrible and most cruel savage was quite a patron of the arts, and was considered a learned man. His love of the arts seems to have consisted chiefly in sacking great cities like Delhi, Shiraz, Baghdad, and Damascus and carrying away the loot to adorn his own capital, Samarqand. But Samarqand's most wonderful and imposing structure is Timur's tomb, the Gur Amir. It is a fit mausoleum for him, for there is something of his commanding presence and strength and fierce spirit in its noble outlines.

The vast territories that Timur had conquered fell away after his death, but a relatively small domain, including Transoxiana and Persia, remained for his successors. For a full hundred years, right through the fifteenth century, these "Timurids," as they were called, held sway over Iran and Bokhara and Herat, and, strangely enough, these descendants of a ruthless conqueror became famous for their generosity and humanity and encouragement of the arts. Timur's own son, Shah Rukh, was the greatest of them. He founded a magnificent library at Herat, which was his capital, and crowds of literary men were attracted to it.

This Timurid period of one hundred years is so noteworthy for its artistic and literary movements that it is known as the "Timurid Renaissance." There was a rich development of Persian literature, and large numbers of fine pictures were painted. Bihzad, the great painter, was head of a school of

\* The name is also given as Tamerlane (ca.1336-1405).

painting. It is interesting to note that side by side with Persian, Turkish literature also developed in the Timurid literary circles. This was also the period, to remind you again, of the Renaissance in Italy.

The Timurids were Turks, and they had succumbed largely to Persian culture. Iran, dominated by Turks and Mongols, imposed its own culture on the conquerors. At the same time Persia struggled to free herself politically, and gradually the Timurids were driven more and more to the east and their domain became smaller round Transoxiana. At the beginning of the sixteenth century Iranian nationalism triumphed, and the Timurids were finally driven out from Persia. A national dynasty, the Safavi or Safavids, came on the Persian throne. It was the second of this dynasty, Tahmasp I, who gave refuge to Humayun fleeing from India before Sher Khan.

The Safavi period lasted for two hundred and twenty years from 1502 to 1722. It is called the golden age of Persian art. Isfahan, the capital, was filled with splendid buildings and became a famous artistic centre, especially noted for painting. Shah Abbas, who ruled from 1587 to 1629, was the outstanding sovereign of this dynasty, and he is considered one of Persia's greatest rulers. He was hemmed in by the Uzbeks on one side and the Ottoman Turks on the other. He drove away both and built up a strong State, cultivated relations with distant States in the West and elsewhere, and devoted himself to beautifying his capital. The town-planning of Shah Abbas in Isfahan has been called "a masterpiece of classical purity and taste." The buildings that were made were not only beautiful in themselves and finely decorated, but the charm of the setting enhanced the effect. European travellers who visited Persia at the time give glowing descriptions.

Architecture, literature, paintings, both frescoes and miniatures, beautiful carpets, fine faience work and mosaics, all

flourished during this golden age of Persian art. Some of the fresco-paintings and miniatures are of an amazing loveliness. Art does not, or should not, know national boundaries, and many influences must have gone to enrich this Persian art of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Italian influence, it is said, is evident. But behind all there is the old artistic tradition of Iran, which persisted through two thousand years. And the sphere of Iranian culture was not confined to Persia. It spread over a vast area from Turkey on the west to India on the east. The Persian language was the language of culture in the Moghal Courts in India, and in western Asia generally, as French used to be in Europe. The old spirit of Persian art has left an immortal emblem in the Taj Mahal at Agra. In much the same way this art has influenced Ottoman architecture as far west as Constantinople, and many a famous building grew up there with the impress of Persian influence.

The Safavis in Persia were more or less contemporaneous with the Great Moghals in India. Babar,\* the first of the Indian Moghals, was one of the Timurid princes of Samarkand. As the Persians had gained strength they had driven the Timurids away, and only parts of Transoxiana and Afghanistan remained under various Timurid princes. Babar had to fight from the age of twelve among these petty princes. He succeeded, and made himself ruler of Kabul, and then came to India. The high culture of the Timurids at the time can be judged from Babar. Shah Abbas, the greatest of the Safavi rulers, was a contemporary of Akbar\*\* and Jehangir. Between the two countries all along there must have been the most intimate contact. For long they had a common frontier, Afghanistan being part of the Moghal Indian Empire.

I have told you of the old traditions and high accomplishments of Persian culture, of the golden age of Persian art. On looking at these phrases again, the language seems rather

\* Babar, or Baber (1480-1530), was a descendant of Tamerlane.

\*\* Akbar (1542-1605) was Babar's grandson.

flowery and somewhat misleading. One might almost think that a real golden age had come to the people of Persia, and their miseries vanished away and they lived happily, like people in fairy-tales. Of course no such thing happened. Culture and art in those days, as even now to a large extent, were the monopoly of a few; the masses, the average person, had nothing to do with them. The life of the masses, indeed, from the earliest days has been a constant struggle for food and the necessities of life; it has not differed greatly from the life of the animals. They had no time or leisure for anything else; sufficient and more than sufficient unto the day was the evil thereof; how could they think or appreciate art and culture? Art flourished in Persia and India and China and Italy and the other countries of Europe as a pastime for the Courts and the rich and leisured classes. Only religious art to some extent touched the life of the masses.

But an artistic Court did not signify good government; rulers who prided themselves on their patronage of art and literature were often enough incompetent and cruel as rulers. The whole system of society in Persia, as in most other countries at the time, was more or less feudal. Strong kings became popular because they stopped many of the petty exactions of the feudal lords. There were periods of relatively good rule and other periods of thoroughly bad rule.

Just when Moghal rule was in its last stages in India, the Safavi dynasty came to an end, about 1725. As usual, the dynasty had played itself out. Feudalism was gradually breaking up, and economic changes were going on in the country, upsetting the old order. Heavy taxation made matters worse, and discontent spread among the people. The Afghans, who were then under the Safavis, rose in revolt, and not only succeeded in their own country, but seized Isfahan and deposed the Shah. The Afghans were soon driven out by a Persian chief, Nadir Shah, who later took the crown himself. It was this Nadir Shah who raided India, during the last days



of the decrepit Moghals, massacred the people of Delhi, and took away vast treasure, including the Peacock Throne of Shah Jehan. Persian history during the eighteenth century is a dismal record of civil war and changing rules and misrules.

The nineteenth century brought new troubles. Persia was coming into conflict with the expanding and aggressive imperialism of Europe. To the north, Russia was ceaselessly pressing, and the British were advancing from the Persian Gulf. Persia was not far from India; their frontiers were gradually approaching each other, and indeed to-day there is a common frontier between them. Persia was on the direct route to India and overlooked the sea-route to India. The whole of British policy was based on the protection of their Indian Empire and the routes leading to it. In no event were they prepared to see their great rival Russia sitting astride this route and looking hungrily at India. So both the British and the Russians took a very lively interest in Persia and harassed the poor country. The Shahs were thoroughly incompetent and foolish, and usually played into their hands either by trying to fight them at the wrong moment or by fighting their own people. Persia might have been wholly occupied by Russia or England and annexed or made a protectorate like Egypt but for the rivalry between these two Powers.

At the beginning of the twentieth century Persia became the object of greed for another reason. Oil or petroleum was discovered, and this was very valuable. The old Shah was induced to give a very favourable concession for the exploitation of oil-fields in Persia to a British subject, D'Arcy, in 1901 for the long period of sixty years. Some years later a British company, the Anglo-Persian Oil Company, was formed to work the oil-fields. This Company has been working there since, and has made huge profits out of this oil business. A small part of the profits went to the Persian Government, but a great part went outside the country to the shareholders

of the Company, and among the biggest shareholders is the British Government.

As imperialism threatened Persia, and the Shah became more and more its tool, inevitably it led to the growth of nationalism. A nationalist party was formed. This party resented foreign interference, and objected equally strongly to the Shah's autocracy. They demanded a democratic constitution and modern reforms. The country was misgoverned and heavily taxed, and the British and Russians were continually interfering. The reactionary Shah felt more at ease with these foreign governments than with his own people who were demanding a measure of freedom. This demand for a democratic constitution came chiefly from the new middle classes and the intellectuals. The victory of Japan over Tsarist Russia in 1904 impressed and excited the Persian nationalists greatly, both because it was a victory of an Asiatic Power over a European one, and because Tsarist Russia was their own aggressive and troublesome neighbour. The Russian revolution of 1905, although it failed and was ruthlessly crushed, added to the enthusiasm and desire for action of the Persian nationalists. The pressure on the Shah was so great that he reluctantly agreed to a democratic constitution in 1906. The National Assembly called the "Mejlis," was established, and the Persian Revolution seemed to have succeeded.

But the Shah had no intention of effacing himself, and the Russians and British had no love for a democratic Persia which might become strong and troublesome. There was conflict between the Shah and the Mejlis, and the Shah actually bombarded his own parliament. But the people and the troops were with the Mejlis and the nationalists, and the Shah was only saved by Russian troops. Both Russia and England had, under some pretext or other—usually the excuse of protecting their subjects—brought their own troops and kept them. The Russians had their dreaded Cossacks, and the British

utilized Indian troops to bully the Persians with whom we had no quarrel.

Persia was in great difficulties. She had no money, and the condition of the people was bad. The Mejlis tried hard to improve matters; but most of their efforts were scotched by the opposition of either the Russians or the British or both. Eventually they looked for help to America and appointed an able American financier to help them in reforming their finances. This American, Morgan Shuster, tried his best to do so, but always he came up against the solid walls of Russian or British opposition. Disgusted and disheartened, he left the country and returned home. In a book Shuster wrote afterwards he gave the story of how Russian and British imperialism was crushing the life out of Persia. The very name of the book is significant and tells a tale—*The Struggling of Persia*.

Persia seemed destined to disappear as an independent State. The first step towards this end had already been taken by Russia and England by dividing up the country into their "spheres of influence." Their soldiers occupied important centres; a British company exploited the oil resources. Persia was in a thoroughly miserable condition. Outright annexation by a foreign Power might even have been better, for this would have brought some responsibility with it. Then came the outbreak of the World War in 1914.

Persia declared her neutrality in this war, but the declarations of the weak have little effect on the strong. Persia's neutrality was ignored by all the parties concerned, and foreign armies came and fought each other, regardless of what the unhappy Persian Government thought of the matter. All round Persia were countries who were in the war. England and Russia were allies on one side; Turkey, whose dominions included at the time Iraq and Arabia, was an ally of Germany. The war ended in the victory of England, France and their allies in 1918, and Persia was then wholly occupied by British forces. England was on the point of declaring a pro-

tecrorate over Persia—a mild form of annexation—and there were also dreams of a vast British Middle Eastern Empire from the Mediterranean to Baluchistan and India. But the dreams did not come true. Unfortunately for Britain, Tsarist Russia had vanished, and in her place there was now a Soviet Russia. Also unfortunately for Britain, her plans went astray in Turkey, and Kemal Pasha rescued his country from the very jaws of the Allies.

All this helped the Persian nationalists, and Persia succeeded in remaining nominally free. In 1921 a Persian soldier, Riza Khan, came into prominence by a *coup d'état*. He gained control of the army and later became prime minister. In 1925 the old Shah was deposed and Riza Khan was elected the new Shah by the vote of a Constituent Assembly. He took the name and title of Riza Shah Pahlavi.

[Iran's] national revival is in the true Iranian tradition of two thousand years. It looks back to the early days, prior to Islam, of Iran's greatness, and tries to draw its inspiration from them. The very name which Riza Shah has adopted is a dynastic name—"Pahlavi"—takes one back to the old days. The people of Persia are, of course, Muslims—Shia Muslims—but in so far as their country is concerned, nationalism is a more powerful force. All over Asia this is happening. In Europe this took place one hundred years earlier, in the nineteenth century; but already nationalism is considered by many people there to be an outworn creed, and they look for new faiths and beliefs which fit in more with existing conditions.

Iran is now the official designation of Persia.

## 30. DIGRESSION ABOUT REVOLUTIONS

We must now go back to Europe and have another look at the intricate and ever-changing picture of this continent during the nineteenth century. I told you of democracy and science, and the tremendous revolutions in methods of transport, and popular education and its product, the modern newspaper. All these things made up the civilization of Europe then—the *bourgeois* civilization in which the new middle classes controlled the industrial machine under the capitalist system. This civilization of *bourgeois* Europe went from success to success; it climbed height after height; and toward the end of the century it had impressed itself and all the world with its might, when disaster came.

In Asia we have also seen in some detail this civilization in action. Urged on by its growing industrialism, Europe stretched its arms to distant lands and tried to grab them and control them and generally to interfere with them to its own advantage. By Europe here I mean especially western Europe, which had taken the lead in industrialism.

All these vast changes that were going on in England and the West were not evident to the kings and emperors early in the century. They did not realize the importance of the new forces that were being generated. After Napoleon had been finally removed, the one thought of these rulers of Europe was to preserve themselves and their kind for ever more, to make the world safe for autocracy. They had not wholly recovered from the terrible fright of the French Revolution and Napoleon, and they wanted to take no more chances. They allied themselves in Holy Alliances and the like to preserve the "divine right of kings" to do what they chose, and to prevent the people from raising their heads.

Autocracy and religion joined hands for this purpose, as they had often done before. The Tsar Alexander of Russia was the moving spirit in these alliances. Russia was in a medieval and very backward condition. There were few big cities, commerce was little developed, and even handicrafts were not of a high order. Autocracy flourished unchecked. Conditions were different in other European countries. As one travelled west the middle classes were more and more in evidence. In England there was no autocracy. There was a great deal of difference between the autocrat of the Russias and this rich ruling oligarchy of England. But they had one thing in common—fear of the masses and of revolution.

So all over Europe reaction triumphed and everything that had a liberal look about it was ruthlessly suppressed. By the decisions of the Congress of Vienna in 1815 many nationalities—for instance those of Italy and Eastern Europe—had been placed under alien rule. They had to be kept down by force. But this kind of thing cannot be done successfully for long: there is bound to be trouble. It is like trying to hold the lid of a steaming kettle down. Europe simmered with steam, and repeatedly the steam forced itself out. I have told you of the risings in 1830, when several changes took place in Europe, notably in France, where the Bourbons were finally driven out. These risings frightened the kings and emperors and their ministers all the more, and they suppressed and repressed the people with greater energy.

We have often come across great changes in countries brought about by wars and revolutions. Wars in the past were sometimes religious and sometimes dynastic; often they were political invasions of one nationality by another. Behind all these causes there was usually some economic cause also. Thus most of the invasions by the Central Asian tribes of Europe and Asia were due to their being driven westward by hunger. Economic progress may strengthen a people or a nation and give them an advantage over others. Even in the

so-called religious wars in Europe and elsewhere the economic factor was at work in the background. As we approach modern times we find that religious and dynastic wars cease. War, of course, does not end. Unhappily it becomes more virulent. But its causes now are obviously political and economic. The political causes are chiefly connected with nationalism: the suppression of one nation by another, or the conflict between two aggressive nationalisms. Even this conflict is largely due to economic causes, such as the demand by modern industrial countries for raw materials and markets.

Revolutions have undergone the same kind of change in the past. Early revolutions were usually palace revolutions: members of the ruling families intriguing against each other and fighting and murdering each other; or an exasperated populace rising and putting an end to a tyrant; or an ambitious soldier seizing the throne with the help of the army. Many of these palace revolutions took place among a few, and the mass of the people were not much affected by them, and they seldom cared. The rulers changed, but the system remained the same, and the lives of the people continued unchanged. Of course a bad ruler might tyrannize a great deal and become unbearable; a better ruler might be more tolerable. But whether the ruler was good or bad, the social and economic condition of the people would not usually be affected by a mere political change. There would be no social revolution.

National revolutions involve a greater change. When a nation is ruled by another, an alien ruling class is dominant. This is injurious in many ways, as the subject country is ruled for the benefit of another country, or of a foreign class benefiting by such rule. Of course it hurts greatly the self-respect of the subject-people. Besides this, the alien ruling class keeps out the upper classes of the subject country from positions of power and authority, which they might have otherwise occupied. A successful national revolution at

least removes the foreign element, and the dominant elements in the country immediately take its place. Thus these classes profit greatly by the removal of the superior alien class; the country generally profits because it will not then be ruled in the interests of another country. Those lower in the scale may not profit much, unless the national revolution is accompanied by a social revolution also.

A social revolution is a very different affair from the other revolutions, which merely change things on the surface. It involves a political revolution also, but it is something much more than that, as it changes the fabric of society. The English Revolution, which made Parliament supreme, was not only a political revolution, but partly a social one also, as it meant the association of the richer *bourgeoisie* with those in power. This upper *bourgeois* class thus rose politically and socially; the lower *bourgeoisie* and the masses generally were not affected. The French Revolution was even more of a social revolution. As we have seen, it upset the whole order of society, and for a while even the masses functioned. Ultimately the *bourgeoisie* triumphed here also, and the masses were sent back to their place, having played their rôle in the revolution; but the privileged nobles were removed.

It is obvious that such social revolutions are much more far-reaching than merely political changes, and they are intimately connected with social conditions. An ambitious, over-eager person or group cannot bring about a social revolution, unless conditions are such that the masses are ready for it. By their being ready I do not mean that they are consciously prepared after being told to be so. I mean that social and economic conditions are such that life becomes too great a burden for them, and they can find no relief or adjustment except in such a change. As a matter of fact, for ages past, life has been such a burden for vast numbers of people, and it is amazing how they have tolerated it. Sometimes they have broken out in revolt, chiefly peasant revolts and jac-



*queries*, and in their mad anger blindly destroyed what they could lay hands upon. But these people were not conscious of any desire to change the social order. In spite of this ignorance, however, there were repeated breakdowns of the existing social conditions in the past, in ancient Rome, in the Middle Ages in Europe, in India, in China, and many an empire has fallen because of them.

In the past, social and economic changes took place slowly, and, for long periods methods of production and distribution and transport remained much the same. People, therefore, did not notice the process of change, and thought that the old social order was permanent and unchangeable. Religion put a divine halo round this order and the customs and beliefs which accompanied it. People became so convinced of this that they never thought of changing the order even when conditions were so changed that it was manifestly inapplicable. With the coming of the Industrial Revolution and the vast changes in methods of transport, social changes became much swifter. New classes came to the front and became wealthy. A new industrial working class arose, very different from the artisans and field-labourers. All this required a new economic arrangement and political changes. Western Europe was in a curious state of misfit. A wise society would make the necessary changes whenever the need for them arises, and so derive full benefit from changing conditions. But societies are not wise, and they do not think as a whole. Individuals think of themselves and of what will profit them; classes of people having similar interests do likewise. If a class dominates any society it wants to remain there and to profit by exploiting the other classes below it. Wisdom and foresight would demonstrate that in the long run the best way of profiting oneself is to profit society as a whole of which one is a member. But a person or class in power wants to hold on to what it possesses. The easiest method of doing so is to make the other

classes and people believe that the existing social order is the very best possible. Religion is dragged in to impress this on the people; education is made to teach the same lesson; till at length, amazing as it is, almost every one believes in it absolutely and does not think of changing it. Even the people that suffer from this system actually believe that it is right for it to continue, and for them to be kicked and cuffed, and to starve while others live in plenty.

So people imagine that there is an unchanging social system and it is nobody's fault if the majority suffer under it. It is their own fault, it is kismet, it is fate, it is the punishment for past sins. Society is always conservative, and dislikes change. It loves to remain in the rut it has got into, and firmly believes that it was meant to remain there. So much so that it punishes most of those individuals who, wishing to improve its condition, tell it to come out of the rut.

But social and economic conditions do not wait for the pleasure of the complacent and unthinking in society. They march on, although people's ideas remain the same. The distance between these out-of-date notions and reality becomes greater, and if something is not done to reduce this distance and to bring the two together, the system cracks and there is a catastrophe. This is what brings about real social revolutions. If conditions are such, a revolution is bound to come, though it may be delayed by the drag of old-fashioned ideas. If these conditions do not exist, then a few individuals, however much they may try, cannot bring it about. When a revolution does break out, the veil that hides actual conditions from the people is removed and understanding comes to them very soon. Once they are out of the rut, they rush ahead. That is why during revolutionary periods people go forward with tremendous energy. Thus revolution is the inevitable result of conservatism and holding back. If society could avoid falling into the foolish error that there is an unchang-

ing social order, but would always keep in line with changing conditions, there would be no social revolution. There would then be continuous evolution.

### 31. SOME FAMOUS MODERN WRITERS

The idea to say something on the subject [of literature] had taken possession of my mind, and I could not rid myself of it. For art and literature often give greater insight into a nation's soul than the superficial activities of the multitude. They take us to a region of calm and serene thought which is not affected by the passions and prejudices of the moment. But to-day the poet and the artist are seldom looked upon as the prophets of to-morrow and they meet with little honour. If some honour comes to them at all, it usually comes after they are dead.

Goethe really belonged to the eighteenth century, for he was born in 1749, but he lived to the ripe old age of eighty-three, and thus saw a good third of the next century. He lived through one of the stormiest periods of European history, and saw his own country overrun by Napoleon's armies. In his own life he experienced much sorrow, but gradually he gained an inner command over life's difficulties and attained a detachment and calm which brought peace to him. Napoleon first saw him when he was over sixty. As he stood in the doorway, there was something in his face and figure, an untroubled look and a bearing so full of dignity, that Napoleon exclaimed: "*Voilà un homme!*" He dabbled in many things, and whatever he did, he did with distinction. He was a philosopher, a poet, a dramatist, and a scientist interested in many different sciences; and, besides all this, his practical job was that of a minister in the Court of a petty

German prince! He is best known to us as a writer, and his most famous book is *Faust*. His fame spread far during his long life, and in his own sphere of literature he came to be regarded by his countrymen almost as a demi-god.

Goethe had a contemporary, somewhat younger than he was, named Schiller, who was also a great poet. Much younger was Heinrich Heine, yet another great and delightful poet in German, who has written very beautiful lyrics. All these three—Goethe, Schiller and Heine—were steeped in the classical culture of ancient Greece.

Germany has long been known as the land of philosophers, and I might as well mention one or two names to you, although perhaps they will not interest you greatly. Only those people who have a passion for the subject need try to read their books, for they are very abstruse and difficult. None the less these and other philosophers are interesting and instructive, for they kept alight the torch of thought, and through them one can follow the development of ideas. Immanuel Kant was the great German philosopher of the eighteenth century, and he lived on to the turn of the century, when he was eighty. Hegel is another great name in philosophy. He followed Kant, and is supposed to have greatly influenced Karl Marx, the father of communism. So much for the philosophers.

The early years of the nineteenth century produced quite a number of eminent poets, especially in England. Russia's best-known national poet, Pushkin, also lived then. He died young as the result of a duel. There were several poets in France also, but I shall mention only two French names. One is that of Victor Hugo, who was born in 1802 and lived, like Goethe, to the age of eighty-three and, also like Goethe, became a kind of demi-god of literature in his own country. He had a varied career both as a writer and as a politician. He started life as an aggressive royalist and almost a believer in autocracy. Gradually he changed step by step

till he became a republican in 1848. Louis Napoleon, when he became President of the short-lived Second Republic, exiled him for his republican views. In 1871 Victor Hugo favoured the Commune of Paris. From the extreme right of conservatism he had moved gradually but surely to the extreme left of socialism. Most people grow conservative and reactionary as they become older. Hugo did the exact opposite. But we are concerned here with him as a writer. He was a great poet, novelist and dramatist.

The second French name I shall mention is that of Honoré de Balzac. He was a contemporary of Victor Hugo's, but was very different from him. He was a novelist of tremendous energy, and wrote a huge number of novels during a fairly short life. His stories are connected with one another; the same characters often appear in them. His object was to mirror the whole of the French life of his day in his novels, and he called the whole series *La Comédie Humaine*. It was a very ambitious idea, and although he worked hard and long, he could not complete the enormous task he had set himself.

In England three brilliant young poets stand out in the early years of the nineteenth century. They were contemporaries, and they all died young within three years of each other. These three were Keats, Shelley and Byron. Keats had a hard tussle with poverty and discouragement, and when he died in Rome in 1821 at the age of twenty-six he was little known. And yet he had written some very beautiful poetry. Keats belonged to the middle classes, and it is interesting to note that if lack of money was an obstruction in his way, how much more difficult must it be for the poor to become poets and writers.

We are apt to forget that poetry and fine writing, and culture generally, are monopolies of the well-to-do classes. Poetry and culture have little place in a poor man's hut; they are not meant for empty stomachs. So our present-day culture becomes a reflection of the well-to-do *bourgeois* mind. It may

change greatly when the worker takes charge of it in a different social system where he has the opportunities and leisure to indulge in culture. Some such change is being watched with interest in Soviet Russia to-day.

This also makes it clear to us that a great deal of our cultural poverty in India during the last few generations is due to our people's excessive poverty. It is an insult to talk of culture to people who have nothing to eat. This blight of poverty affects even those few who happen to be relatively well-to-do, and so unhappily even these classes in India are to-day singularly uncultured. But even in this general poverty and drabness, India can still produce splendid men and magnificent exemplars of culture like Gandhi and Rabindranath Tagore.

I have drifted away from my subject.

Shelley was a most lovable creature; full of fire from his early youth and the champion of freedom in everything. He was expelled from his college at Oxford for writing an essay on *The Necessity of Atheism*. He (and Keats also) went through his brief life as a poet is supposed to do, living in his imagination and in the air and regardless of worldly difficulties. He was drowned near the Italian coast a year after the death of Keats. I need not tell you of his famous poems as you can easily find them out for yourself. But I shall give you one of his shorter poems. It is by no means among his best, but it brings out the awful fate of the poor worker in our present civilization. He is in almost as bad a condition as the old slaves were. It is more than a hundred years since the poem was written, and yet it applies to present-day conditions. It is called *The Mask of Anarchy*.

What is Freedom?—ye can tell  
That which slavery is, too well—  
For its very name has grown  
To an echo of your own.

'Tis to work and have such pay  
 As just keeps life from day to day  
 In your limbs, as in a cell  
 For the tyrant's use to dwell.

So that ye for them are made  
 Loom, and plough, and sword, and spade,  
 With or without your own will bent  
 To their defence and nourishment.

'Tis to see your children weak  
 With their mothers pine and peak,  
 When the winter winds are bleak—  
 They are dying, whilst I speak.

'Tis to hunger for such diet  
 As the rich man in his riot  
 Casts to the fat dogs that lie  
 Surfeiting beneath his eye.

'Tis to be a slave in soul  
 And to hold no strong control  
 Over your own wills, but be  
 All that others make of ye.

And at length, when ye complain  
 With a murmur weak and vain,  
 'Tis to see the tyrant's crew  
 Ride over your wives and you—  
 Blood is on the grass like dew.

Byron has also written fine poetry in praise of freedom, but it is national freedom, and not economic freedom, as in Shelley's poem. He died in the Greek national war of liberation against Turkey, two years after Shelley. I am rather prejudiced against Byron as a man, and yet I have a fellow-feeling for him, for did he not go to Harrow School and Trinity College, Cambridge—my school and college? Unlike Keats and Shelley, fame came to him in his youth, and he

was lionized by London society, only to be dropped later.

There were two other well-known poets about this time, both much longer-lived than this youthful trio. Wordsworth, who lived for eighty years from 1770 to 1850, is considered one of the great English poets. He was very fond of Nature, and much of his poetry is Nature-poetry. The other was Coleridge; a few of his poems are very good.

The early nineteenth century also saw three famous novelists. Walter Scott was the eldest of these, and his *Waverley* novels were very popular. I suppose you have read some of them. I remember liking them when I was a boy, but tastes change as one grows up, and I am sure they would bore me now if I read them. Thackeray and Dickens were the two other novelists. Both, I think, are far superior to Scott. Thackeray was born in Calcutta in 1811, and spent five or six years there. Some of his books have got realistic descriptions of the Indian nabobs—that is, the English people in India who, having collected a huge fortune and become fat and peppery, returned to England to enjoy themselves.

I shall finish by giving a poem from Goethe's *Faust*.

Alas, alas !

Thou hast smitten the world,  
Thou hast laid it low,  
Shattered, o'er thrown,  
Into nothingness hurled  
Crushed by a demi-god's blow

We bear them away,  
The shards of the world,  
We sing well-a-day  
Over the loveliness gone,  
Over the beauty slain.  
Build it again,  
Great child of Earth,  
Build it again



With a finer worth,  
 In thine own bosom build it on high !  
 Take up thy life once more :  
 Run the race again !  
 High and clear  
 Let a lovelier strain  
 Ring out than ever before !

## 32. DARWIN AND THE TRIUMPH OF SCIENCE

From the poets let us go to the scientists. The poets, I am afraid, are still considered rather ineffectual beings; but the scientists are the miracle-workers of to-day, and they have influence and honour. This was not so before the nineteenth century. In the earlier centuries a scientist's life was a risky affair in Europe and sometimes ended at the stake. [In 1600, at the age of fifty-two], Giordano Bruno was burnt in Rome by the Church. A few years later, in the seventeenth century, Galileo came very near the stake because he had stated that the earth went round the sun. He escaped being burnt for heresy because he apologized and withdrew his previous statements. In this way the Church in Europe was always coming into conflict with science and trying to suppress new ideas. Organized religion, in Europe or elsewhere, has various dogmas attached to it which its followers are supposed to accept without doubt or questioning. Science has a very different way of looking at things. It takes nothing for granted and has, or ought to have, no dogmas. It seeks to encourage an open mind and tries to reach truth by repeated experiment. This outlook is obviously very different

from the religious outlook, and it is not surprising that there was frequent conflict between the two.

Experiments of various kinds have, I suppose, been carried on by different peoples in all ages. In ancient India, it is said that chemistry and surgery were fairly advanced, and this could only have been so after a great deal of experimenting. The old Greeks also experimented to some extent. As for the Chinese, recently I read a most astonishing account, which gave extracts from Chinese writers of fifteen hundred years ago, showing that they knew of the theory of evolution, and of the circulation of the blood through the body, and that Chinese surgeons gave anæsthetics. But we do not know enough about these times to justify any conclusions. If the ancient civilizations had discovered these methods, why did they forget them later? And why did they not make greater progress? Or was it that they did not attach enough importance to this kind of progress?

The Arabs were very fond of experimenting, and Europe in the Middle Ages followed them. But all their experimentation was not truly scientific. They were always looking for what was called the "Philosophers' Stone," which was supposed to have the virtue of turning common metals into gold. People spent their lives in complicated chemical experiments to find the secret of such transmutation of metals; alchemy this was called. They also searched diligently for an "elixir of life" or *amrit*, which would give immortality. There is no record, outside fairy tales, of any one having ever succeeded in finding this *amrit* or the famous stone. This was really dabbling in some kind of magic in the hope of gaining wealth and power and long life. It had nothing to do with the spirit of science. Science has no concern with magic and sorcery and the like.

The real scientific method, however, developed gradually in Europe, and among the greatest names in the history of science is that of the Englishman, Isaac Newton, who lived

from 1642 to 1727. Newton explained the law of gravitation—that is, of how things fall; and with the help of this, and other laws which had been discovered, he explained the movements of the sun and the planets. Everything, both big and small, seemed to be explained by his theories, and he received great honour.

The spirit of science was gaining on the dogmatic spirit of the Church. It could no longer be put down or its votaries sent to the stake. Many scientists patiently worked and experimented and collected facts and knowledge, especially in England and France, and later in Germany and America. The body of scientific knowledge thus grew. The eighteenth century in Europe, you will remember, was the century when rationalism spread among the educated classes. It was the century of Voltaire and Rousseau and many other able Frenchmen who wrote on all manner of subjects and created a ferment in the minds of the people. The great French Revolution was being hatched in the womb of the century. This rationalistic outlook fitted in with the scientific outlook, and both opposed the dogmatic outlook of the Church.

The nineteenth century was, among other things, the century of science. The Industrial Revolution, the Mechanical Revolution, and the amazing changes in the methods of transport, were all due to science. The numerous factories had changed the methods of production; railways and steamships had suddenly narrowed the world; the electric telegraph was an even greater wonder. Old ideas were naturally much shaken by this, and the hold of religion grew less. Factory life, as compared to an agricultural life on the land, made people think more of economic relations than of religious dogmas.

In the middle of the century, in 1859, a book was published in England which brought the conflict between the dogmatic and the scientific outlook to a head. This book was the *Origin of Species*, by Charles Darwin. Darwin is not among the very great scientists; there was nothing very new in what he said.

Other geologists and naturalists had been at work before Darwin, and had gathered much material. None the less Darwin's book was epoch-making; it produced a vast impression and helped in changing the social outlook more than any other scientific work. It resulted in a mental earthquake and made Darwin famous.

Darwin had wandered about in South America and the Pacific as a naturalist and had collected an enormous amount of material and data. He used this to show how each species of animals had changed and developed by natural selection. Many people had thought till then that every species or kind of animal, including man, had been separately created by God, and had remained apart and unchangeable since then—that is to say that one species could not become another. Darwin showed, by a mass of actual examples, that species did change from one to another, and that this was the normal method of development. These changes took place by natural selection. A slight variation in a species, if it happened to be profitable to it in any way or helped it to survive others, would gradually lead to a permanent change, as obviously more of this varied species would survive. After a while this varied species would be in the majority and would swamp the others. In this way changes and variations would creep in, one after the other, and after some time there would be an almost new species produced. So in course of time many new species would arise by this process of survival of the fittest by natural selection. This would apply to plants and animals, and even man. It is possible, according to this theory, that there might be a common ancestor of all the various plant and animal species we see to-day.

A few years later [1871] Darwin published another book—*The Descent of Man*—in which he applied his theory to man. This idea of evolution and of natural selection is accepted by most people now, though not exactly in the way Darwin and his followers put it forward. Indeed, it is quite a common

thing for people to apply this principle of selection artificially to the breeding of animals and the cultivation of plants and fruits and flowers. Many of the prize animals and plants to-day are new species, artificially created. If man can produce such changes and new species in a relatively short time, what could not Nature do in this line in the course of hundreds of thousands or millions of years?

All this seems obvious enough to us now. But it was not so obvious seventy years ago. Most people in Europe still believed at the time in the Biblical account of the creation of the world just four thousand and four years before Christ, and of each plant and animal being created separately, and finally man. They believed in the Flood and in Noah's Ark with its pairs of animals, so that no species might become extinct. All this did not fit in with the Darwinian theory. Darwin and the geologists talked of millions of years as the age of the earth, and not a paltry six thousand years. So there was a tremendous tussle in the minds of men and women, and many good people did not know what to do. Their old faith told them to believe in one thing, and their reason said another. When people believe blindly in dogmas and the dogmas receive a shock, they feel helpless and miserable and without any solid ground to stand upon. But a shock which wakes us to reality is good.

So there was a great argument and great conflict in England and elsewhere in Europe between science and religion. There could be no doubt of the result. The new world of industry and mechanical transport depended on science, and science thus could not be discarded. Science won all along the line, and "natural selection" and "survival of the fittest" became part of the ordinary jargon of the people, who used the phrases without fully understanding what they meant. Darwin had suggested in his *Descent of Man* that there might have been a common ancestor of man and certain apes. This could not be proved by examples showing various stages in the

process of development. From this there grew the popular joke about the "missing link." And, curiously enough, the ruling classes twisted Darwin's theory to suit their own convenience, and were firmly convinced that it supplied yet another proof of their superiority. They were the fittest to survive in the battle of life, and so by "natural selection" they had come out on top and were the ruling class. This became the justification for one class dominating over another, or one race ruling over another. It became the final argument of imperialism and the supremacy of the white race. And many people in the West thought that the more domineering they were, the more ruthless and strong, the higher up in the scale of human values they were likely to be. It is not a pleasant philosophy.

Darwin's theories have been criticized subsequently by other scientists, but his general ideas still hold. One of the results of a general acceptance of his theories was to make people believe in the idea of progress, which meant that man and society, and the world as a whole, were marching towards perfection and becoming better and better. This idea of progress was not the result of Darwin's theory alone. The whole trend of scientific discovery and the changes brought about by the Industrial Revolution and afterwards had prepared people's minds for it. Darwin's theory confirmed it, and people began to imagine themselves as marching proudly from victory to victory to the goal of human perfection, whatever that might be. It is interesting to note that this idea of progress was quite a new one. There seems to have been no such idea in the past in Europe or Asia, or in any of the old civilizations. In Europe, right up to the Industrial Revolution, people looked upon the past as the ideal period. The old Greek and Roman classical period was supposed to be finer and more advanced and cultured than subsequent periods. There was progressive deterioration or worsening of the race, so people thought, or at any rate there was no marked change.

In India there is much the same idea of deterioration, of a golden age that is past. Indian mythology measures time in enormous periods, like the geological periods, but always it begins with the great age, *Satya Yuga*, and comes down to the present age of evil, the *Kali Yuga*.

So we see that the idea of human progress is quite a modern notion. Our knowledge of past history, such as it is, makes us believe in this idea. But, then, our knowledge is still very limited, and it may be that with fuller knowledge our outlook might change. Even to-day there is not quite the same enthusiasm about "progress" as there was in the second half of the nineteenth century. If progress leads us to destroy each other on a vast scale, as was done in the World War, there is something wrong with such progress. Another thing worth remembering is that Darwin's "survival of the fittest" does not necessarily mean the survival of the best. All these are speculations for the learned. What we have to note is that the old and widespread idea of a static or unchanging, or even deteriorating, society was pushed aside by modern science in the nineteenth century, and in its place came the idea of a dynamic and changing society. Also there came the idea of progress. And indeed society did change out of all recognition during this period.

As I have been telling you of Darwin's theory of the origin of species, it might interest you to know what a Chinese philosopher wrote on the subject twenty-five hundred years ago. Tson Tse was his name, and he wrote in the sixth century before Christ, about the time of the Buddha:

All organizations are originated from a single species. This single species had undergone many gradual and continuous changes, and then gave rise to all organisms of different forms. Such organisms were not differentiated immediately, but, on the contrary, they acquired their differences through gradual change, generation after generation.

This is near enough to Darwin's theory, and it is amazing that the old Chinese biologist should have arrived at a conclusion which it took the world two and a half millennia to rediscover.

As the nineteenth century progressed the rate of change became ever faster. Science produced wonder after wonder, and an endless pageant of discovery and invention dazzled people's eyes. Many of these discoveries changed the life of the people greatly, like the telegraph, the telephone, the automobile and later the aeroplane. Science dared to measure the farthest heavens and also the invisible atom and its still smaller components. It lessened the drudgery of man, and life became easier for millions. Because of science there was a tremendous increase in the population of the world, and especially of the industrial countries. At the same time science evolved the most thoroughgoing methods of destruction. But this was not the fault of science. It increased man's command over Nature, but man with all this power did not know how to command himself. And so he misbehaved often and wasted the gifts of science. But the triumphant march of science went on, and within one hundred and fifty years this changed the world more than all the previous many thousand years had done. Indeed, in every direction and in every department of life science has revolutionized the world.

This march of science is continuing and it seems to rush on faster than ever. There is no rest for it. A railway is built. By the time it is ready to function it is already out of date. A machine is bought and fixed up; within a year or two better and more efficient machines of that very kind are being made. And so the mad race goes on, and now in our time electricity is replacing steam, and thus bringing about as great a revolution as the Industrial Revolution of a century and a half ago.

Vast numbers of scientists and experts are continually at work in the numerous highways and byways of science. The



greatest name [in modern times] is that of Albert Einstein, who has succeeded in modifying to some extent the famous theory of Newton.

So vast has been the recent progress in science and so great the additions and changes in scientific theory, that scientists themselves have been taken aback. They have lost all their old complacency and pride of certainty. They are hesitant now about their conclusions and their prophecies for the future.

But this is a development of the twentieth century and our own day. In the nineteenth century there was full assurance, and science, priding itself on its innumerable successes, imposed itself on the people, and they bowed down to it as to a god.

### 33. THE ADVANCE OF DEMOCRACY

I tried to give you a glimpse of the progress of science in the nineteenth century. Let us now look at another aspect of this century—the growth of the democratic idea.

You will remember the war of ideas in eighteenth-century France; Voltaire, the greatest thinker and writer of his day; and others in France, who challenged many old notions of religion and society and boldly advanced new theories. Such political thinking was largely confined to France at the time. In Germany there were the philosophers who interested themselves in more abstruse questions of philosophy. In England, business and trade were increasing and most people were not fond of thinking unless circumstances made them do so. One notable book, however, came out in England in the second half of the eighteenth century. This was Adam Smith's *Wealth of Nations* [1776]. It was not a book on politics as

such, but on political economy or economics. This subject, like all other subjects at the time, was mixed up with religion and ethics, and there was thus a great deal of confusion about it. Adam Smith dealt with it in a scientific way and, disregarding all ethical complications, tried to find natural laws which governed economics. Economics deals with the management of the income and expenditure of the people or a country as a whole, of what they produce and what they consume, and their relations with each other and other countries and peoples. Adam Smith believed that all these rather complicated operations took place according to fixed natural laws, which he set down in his book. He also believed that full liberty should be given for the development of industry so that these laws might not be interfered with. This was the beginning of the doctrine of *laissez-faire* about which I have already told you something. Adam Smith's book had nothing to do with the new democratic ideas which were germinating in France at the time. But his attempt at scientific treatment of one of the most important problems which affected men and nations shows that men were going in a new direction, away from the old theological way of looking at everything. Adam Smith is considered the father of the science of economics, and he inspired many economists of the nineteenth century.

The new science of economics was confined to professors and a few well-read men. But meanwhile the new ideas of democracy were spreading, and the American and French Revolutions gave them tremendous popularity and advertisement. The fine-sounding words and phrases of the American Declaration of Independence and the French Declaration of Rights stirred people to the depths. To the millions who were oppressed and exploited they brought a thrill and a message of deliverance. Both the declarations spoke of liberty and equality and of the right to happiness which every one has. The proud declaration of these precious rights did not result in the people obtaining them. Even now, more than a century

and a half after these declarations, few can be said to enjoy them. But even the declaration of these principles was extraordinary and life-giving.

The old ideas in Europe as elsewhere, in Christianity as in other religions, was that sin and unhappiness were the common and inevitable lot of man. Religion seemed to give a permanent and even an honoured place to poverty and misery in this world. The promises and rewards of religion were all for some other world; here we were told to bear our lot with resignation and not to seek any fundamental change. Charity was encouraged, the giving of crumbs to the poor, but there was no idea of doing away with poverty, or with a system which resulted in poverty. The very ideas of liberty and equality were opposed to the authoritarian outlook of the Church and society.

Democracy did not, of course, say that all men were in fact equal. It could not say this, because it is obvious enough that there are inequalities between different men: physical inequalities which result in some being stronger than others, mental inequalities which are seen in some people being abler or wiser than others, and moral inequalities which make some unselfish and others not so. It is quite possible that many of these inequalities are due to different kinds of upbringing and education or want of education. Of two boys or girls who are similar in ability, give one a good education and the other no education, and after some years there will be a vast difference between the two. Or give one of them healthy food and the other bad and insufficient food, and the former will grow properly, while the latter will be weak and ailing and under-developed. So one's upbringing and surroundings and training and education make a vast deal of difference, and it may be that if we could give the same training and opportunities to everybody, there would be far less inequality than there is now. This is indeed very likely. But so far as democracy is concerned, it admitted that men were as a matter of

fact unequal, and yet it stated that each one of them should be treated as having an equal political and social value. If we accept this democratic theory in its entirety, we are led to all manner of revolutionary conclusions. We need not go into these at this stage, but one obvious consequence of the theory was that each person should have a vote for the election of a representative to the governing assembly or parliament. The vote was the symbol of political power, and it was assumed that if every one had a vote, each such person would have an equal share in political power. Therefore one of the principal demands of democracy, right through the nineteenth century, was the extension of the franchise—that is, the right to vote. Adult suffrage or franchise meant that every adult or grown-up person should have the vote. For a long time women were not allowed to vote, and there was not very long ago a tremendous agitation by them, especially in Britain. In most advanced countries now there is adult suffrage for both men and women.

But, curiously enough, when most people had got the vote they found that it did not make very much difference to them. In spite of having the vote, they had no power, or very little power, in the State. A vote is of little use to a hungry man. The people with real power were those who could take advantage of his hunger and make him work to do anything else that they wanted to their own advantage. Thus political power, which the vote was supposed to give, was seen to be a shadow with no substance, without economic power, and the brave dreams of the early democrats, that equality would follow from the vote, came to nothing.

This was, however, a much later development. In the early days—the end of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth centuries—there was great enthusiasm among the democrats. Democracy was going to make everybody a free and equal citizen and the government of the State would work for the happiness of everybody. There was a great re-

action against the autocracy of kings and governments of the eighteenth century and the way they had abused their absolute power. This led people to proclaim the rights of individuals in their declarations. Probably these statements of the rights of individuals in the American and French declarations erred somewhat on the other side. In a complex society it is not an easy matter to separate individuals and give them perfect freedom. The interests of such an individual and of society may and do clash. However this may be, democracy stood for a great deal of individual freedom.

England, which was backward in political ideas in the eighteenth century, was greatly affected by the American and French Revolutions. The first reaction was one of fear against the new democratic ideas and the possibility of a social revolution at home. The ruling classes became even more conservative and reactionary. But still the new ideas spread among the intellectuals. Thomas Paine was an interesting Englishman of this period. He was in America at the time of the War of Independence and helped the Americans. He seems to have been partly responsible for converting the Americans to the idea of complete independence. On his return to England he wrote a book, *The Rights of Man*, in defence of the French Revolution which had just begun. In this book he attacked monarchy and pleaded for democracy. The British Government outlawed him because of this, and he had to fly to France. In Paris he soon became a member of the National Convention, but in 1793 he was put in prison by the Jacobins because he had opposed the execution of Louis XVI. In the Paris gaol he wrote another book called *The Age of Reason*, in which he criticized the religious outlook. Paine being out of reach of the English courts (he was discharged from the Paris prison after the death of Robespierre), his English publisher was sentenced to imprisonment for issuing this book. Such a book was considered dangerous to society, as religion was supposed to be necessary to keep the poor in their place.

Several publishers of Paine's book, including women, were sent to prison. It is interesting to find that Shelley, the poet, wrote a letter of protest to the judge.

In Europe the French Revolution was the parent of the democratic ideas that spread throughout the first half of the nineteenth century. Indeed, the very ideas of the Revolution persisted, although conditions were rapidly changing. These democratic ideas were the intellectual reaction against kings and autocracy. They were based on conditions prior to industrialization. But the new industry—steam and big machinery—were completely upsetting the old order. Yet, strange to say, the radicals and democrats of the early nineteenth century ignored these changes and went on talking in the fine phrases of the Revolution and the Declaration of the Rights of Man. To them perhaps these changes were purely material and did not affect the high spiritual and moral and political demands of democracy. But material things have a way of refusing to be ignored. It is very interesting to find how extraordinarily difficult it is for people to give up old ideas and accept new ones. They will shut their eyes and their minds and refuse to see; they will fight to hold on to the old even when it harms them. They will do almost anything but accept the new ideas and adapt themselves to new conditions. The power of conservatism is prodigious. Even the radicals, who imagine themselves very advanced, often stick to old and exploded ideas, and shut their eyes to changing conditions. It is no wonder that progress is slow, and often there is a great lag between actual conditions and people's ideas—resulting in revolutionary situations.

Democracy was thus for many decades the carrying on of the traditions and ideas of the French Revolution. This failure to adapt itself to the new conditions led to the weakening of democracy towards the end of the century, and later, in the twentieth century, to its repudiation by many people.

The early democrats naturally took to rationalism. Their

demand for freedom of thought and speech could hardly be reconciled with dogmatic religion and theology. Thus democracy joined with science to weaken the hold of theological dogmas. People began to dare to examine the Bible, as if it was an ordinary book and not something that must be accepted blindly and without questioning. This criticism of the Bible was called the "higher criticism." The critics came to the conclusion that the Bible was a collection of documents written by different persons in different ages. They also were of the opinion that Jesus had no intention of founding a religion. Many of the old beliefs were shaken by this criticism.

As the old religious foundations were being weakened by science and democratic ideas, attempts were made to formulate a philosophy to take the place of the old religion. One of these attempts was by a French philosopher, Auguste Comte, who lived from 1798 to 1857. Comte felt that the old theology and dogmatic religions were out of date, but he was convinced that some kind of religion was a social necessity. He therefore proposed a "religion of humanity" and called it "Positivism." This was to be based on love, order and progress. There was nothing supernatural about it; it was based on science. At its back, as indeed at the back of nearly all current ideas of the nineteenth century, was the idea of the progress of the human race. Comte's religion remained the belief of a few intellectuals only, but his general influence on European thought was great. He may be said to begin the study of the science of sociology, which deals with human society and culture.

A contemporary of Comte's, but surviving him by many years, was the English philosopher and economist, John Stuart Mill (1806-1873). Mill was influenced by Comte's teaching as well as by his socialistic ideas. He tried to give a new direction to the English school of political economy, which had grown up round the teachings of Adam Smith, and

brought some socialistic principles into economic thought. But he is best known as the chief "utilitarian." "Utilitarianism" was a new theory, started a little earlier in England, and brought into greater prominence by Mill. As its name suggests, its guiding philosophy was utility or usefulness. "The greatest happiness of the greatest number" was the fundamental principle of the Utilitarians. This was the only test of right and wrong. Actions were said to be right in proportion as they tended to promote happiness, and wrong in so far as they tended to promote the reverse of happiness. Society and government were to be organized with this point of view—the promotion of the greatest happiness of the greatest number. This view-point was not quite the same as the earlier democratic doctrine of equal rights for everybody. The greatest happiness of the greatest number might conceivably require the sacrifice or the unhappiness of a smaller number. I am merely pointing this difference out to you, but we need not discuss it here. Democracy thus came to mean the rights of the majority.

John Stuart Mill was a strong advocate of the democratic idea of liberty for the individual. He wrote a little book, *On Liberty* [1859], which became famous. I shall give you an extract from this book in favour of freedom of speech and the free expression of opinion.

But the peculiar evil of silencing the expression of an opinion is, that it is robbing the human race; posterity as well as the existing generation; those who dissent from the opinion, still more than those who hold it. If the opinion is right, they are deprived of the opportunity of exchanging error for truth; if wrong, they lose, what is almost as great a benefit, the clearer perception and livelier impression of truth, produced by its collision with error. . . . We can never be sure that the opinion we are endeavouring to stifle is a false opinion; and if we were sure, stifling it would be an evil still.



I have given just a few names of important thinkers in western Europe during the nineteenth century to show the way ideas were developing and to serve as landmarks in the world of thought. But the influence of these people, and the early democrats generally, was more or less confined to the intellectual classes. To some extent it percolated through the intellectuals to the others. Although the direct influence on the masses was slight, the indirect influence of this democratic ideology was great. Even the direct influence in some matters, such as the demand for the vote, was great.

As the nineteenth century grew older other movements and ideas developed—the working-class movement and socialism. These had their influence on current democratic notions and were themselves affected by them. Some people looked upon socialism as an alternative to democracy; others considered it as a necessary part of it. We have seen that the democrats were full of notions of liberty and equality and every man's equal right to happiness. But they realized soon that happiness did not come by merely making it a fundamental right. Apart from other things, a certain measure of physical well-being was necessary. A person who was starving was not likely to be happy. This led them to think that happiness depended on a better distribution of wealth among the people. This leads to socialism, and that must wait till our next letter.

In the first half of the nineteenth century democracy and nationalism joined hands wherever subject nations or peoples were fighting for freedom. Mazzini\* of Italy was typical of this kind of democratic patriotism. Later in the century nationalism gradually lost this democratic character and became more aggressive and authoritarian. The State became the god which had to be worshipped by every one.

\* Giuseppe Mazzini (1805-1872) was a lifelong fighter for Italian unity and democracy.

## 34. THE COMING OF SOCIALISM

I have written about the advance of democracy; it was a hard-fought advance. People who have interests in an existing order do not want change, and resist it with all their might. And yet progress or any betterment means such change; an institution or a method of government has to give place to a better one. Those who desire such progress must necessarily attack the old institution or the old custom, and thus their path leads to constant repudiation of existing conditions and conflict with those who profit by them. The ruling classes in western Europe resisted all advance step by step.

But again I shall remind you that these democratic ideas were, during the first half of the nineteenth century, largely confined to the intellectuals. The common people had been powerfully affected by the growth of industrialism and driven from the land to the factories. An industrial working class was growing, huddled up in ugly insanitary factory towns, usually near the coalfields. These workers were changing rapidly and developing a new mentality. They were very different from the peasants and artisans who had flocked to the factories, urged by starvation. The conditions in the factories were appalling, the workers' houses or huts were even worse. There was great misery among them. Little children and women worked incredibly long hours. And yet all attempts at improving these factories and houses by legislation were stoutly opposed by the owners. Was not this a shameful interference, it was said, with the rights of property? Even the compulsory sanitation of private houses was opposed on this ground.

There arose a man among the factory-owners of Manchester [England] who was a humanitarian and who was

pained at the shocking conditions of the workers. This man was Robert Owen. He introduced many reforms in his own factories and improved the condition of his workers. He carried on an agitation among his own class of employers and tried to convert them by argument to a better treatment of labour. Partly because of him, the British Parliament passed the first law to protect the workers against the greed and selfishness of the employers. This was the Factory Act of 1819. This Act laid down that little children of nine should not be made to work more than twelve hours a day.

It was Robert Owen, it is said, who first used the word "socialism" somewhere about 1830. Of course the idea of a levelling-up between the rich and the poor, and a more or less equal distribution of property, was not a new one. Many people had advocated it in the past. In the early communities there had even been a kind of communism, the whole community or village holding land and other property in common. This is called primitive communism, and is to be found in many countries, including India. But the new socialism was something much more than a vague desire to equalize people. It was more definite and, to begin with, it was meant to apply to the new factory system of production. It was thus a child of the industrial system. Owen's idea was to have workers' co-operative societies, and that workers should have a share in the factories. He established model factories and settlements in England and America with more or less success. But he failed to convert his brother employers or the government. His influence during his time, however, was great, and he gave currency to a word, socialism, which has since captivated millions.

All this time capitalist industry was growing, and as it recorded success after success, the problem of the working class grew with it. Capitalism resulted in more and more production, and because of this the population grew with enormous speed, as more people could now be supported

and fed. Huge businesses were built up with intricate co-operation between their different sections, and at the same time the competition of little businesses was crushed out. Wealth was poured into England, but much of this went to start new factories or railways or other such concerns. The workers tried to get better conditions by strikes, which usually failed miserably, and then joined the Chartist movement of the 'forties. This Chartist movement collapsed in the year of revolution, 1848.

The successes of capitalism dazzled people, but still there were some radicals or people with advanced views, or humanitarians, who were not happy at its cut-throat competition and the suffering it caused the workers in spite of the country's growing wealth. In England and Germany and France these people considered various alternatives to it. Several solutions were suggested, and they are all grouped together under the name of socialism or collectivism or social democracy, each of these words vaguely meaning the same thing. There was general agreement among these reformers that the trouble lay in the private ownership and control of industry. If instead of this the State could own and control this, or at any rate the principal means of production, like the land and the chief industries, then there would be no danger of the workers being exploited. So, rather vaguely, people sought an alternative to the capitalist system. But the capitalist system had no intention of collapsing. It was going from strength to strength.

These socialistic ideas were started by intellectuals and, in the case of Robert Owen, by a factory-owner. The workers' trade-union movement developed on different lines for a while, merely seeking higher wages and better conditions. But it was naturally influenced by these ideas, and in its turn it greatly influenced the development of socialism. In each of the three leading industrial countries in Europe—England, France and Germany—socialism developed somewhat differ-

ently, in accordance with the strength and character of the working class in each country. On the whole, English socialism was conservative and believed in evolutionary methods and slow progress; Continental socialism was more radical and revolutionary. In America conditions were different because of the vastness of the country and the demand for labour, and so no strong working-class movement grew up for a long time.

On the Continent of Europe a new creed was finding enthusiastic and ardent support. This was anarchism, a word which seems to terrify many people who know nothing about it. Anarchism meant a society with, as far as possible, no central government and with a great deal of individual freedom. The anarchist ideal was extraordinarily high: "Faith in the ideal of a commonwealth based on altruism, solidarity, and voluntary respect for the other fellow's rights." There was to be no force or compulsion on the part of the State. "That government is best which governs not at all; and when men are prepared for it that will be the kind of government which they will have," said an American, Thoreau.

This seems a very fine ideal—perfect freedom for everybody, each person respecting the other, unselfishness all round, willing co-operation—but the present-day world, with all its selfishness and violence, is far removed from it. The anarchists' desire for no central government or a minimum of government must have arisen as a reaction from the autocracy and despotism under which people had suffered for so long. Governments had crushed them and tyrannized over them, therefore let there be no governments. The anarchists also felt that under some forms of socialism, the State, being master of all the means of production, might itself become despotic. The anarchists were therefore socialists of a kind, laying great stress on local and individual freedom. Many of the socialists, on the other hand, were prepared to agree to the anarchist creed as a distant ideal, but were of opinion that

for some time it would be necessary to have a centralized and strong State government under socialism. Thus, although there was a great deal of difference between socialism and anarchism, there were many shades of each, gradually approaching and overlapping each other.

Anarchism, by its very nature, could not be a well-organized movement. Anarchistic ideas therefore had little chance of spreading in industrialized countries where trade unions and the like were growing up. England thus had no appreciable number of anarchists, nor had Germany. But southern and eastern Europe, which were backward in industrialism, were more fertile ground for these ideas. As modern industry spread to the south and east, anarchism became weaker and weaker. To-day it is practically a dead creed, but even now it is represented to some extent in a non-industrialized country like Spain.

Anarchism as an ideal may have been very fine, but it gave shelter not only to excitable and dissatisfied people, but also to selfish individuals who tried to seek profit for themselves under cloak of the ideal. And it led to a type of violence which has now become associated with the word in every one's mind and which has brought much discredit on it. Unable to do anything on a big scale to change society as they wanted, some anarchists decided to do propaganda in a novel way. This was the "propaganda by the deed," the influence of courageous example, brave deeds to resist tyranny and sacrifice one's own life. There were risings in various places. Of course [they] were put down. This foolish violence was obviously a sign of growing weakness and despair. Gradually, anarchism as a movement faded away.

## 35. KARL MARX AND THE INTERNATIONALS

About the middle of the nineteenth century there appeared in the world of European labour and socialism a new and arresting personality. This man was Karl Marx.

He was a German Jew, born in 1818, who became a student of law and history and philosophy. He came into conflict with the German authorities because of a newspaper he brought out. He went to Paris, where he came into touch with new people and read the new books on socialism and anarchism, and became a convert to the socialistic idea. Here he met another German, Friedrich Engels, who had settled in England and had become a rich factory-owner in the growing cotton industry. Engels was also unhappy and dissatisfied with existing social conditions, and his mind was seeking remedies for the poverty and exploitation he saw around him. Robert Owen's ideas and attempts at reform appealed to him, and he became an Owenite, as Owen's followers were called. The visit to Paris, which led to the first meeting with Karl Marx, changed him also. Marx and Engels henceforward became close friends and colleagues, holding the same views, and working whole-heartedly together for the same cause. They were about the same age.\*

The French Government of the day—it was the time of Louis Philippe—expelled Marx from Paris. He went to London, and there he lived for many years, burying himself in the books of the British Museum. He worked hard and perfected his theories and wrote about them. And yet he was

\* Engels, born in 1820, was two years younger than Marx. He died in 1895, twelve years after Marx.

by no means a mere professor or philosopher spinning theories and cut off from ordinary affairs. Whilst he developed and clarified the rather vague ideology of the socialist movement, and placed definite and clear-cut ideas and objectives before it, he also took an active and leading part in the organization of the movement and of the workers. The events that took place in 1848, the year of revolution in Europe, naturally moved him greatly. In that very year he and Engels jointly issued a manifesto which has become very famous. This was the *Communist Manifesto*, in which they discussed the ideas which lay behind the great French Revolution as well as the subsequent revolts in 1830 and 1848, and pointed out how inadequate and inconsistent they were with actual conditions. They criticized the then prevailing democratic cries of liberty, equality and fraternity, and pointed out that they meant little to the people, and merely gave a pious covering to the *bourgeois* State. They then briefly developed their own theory of socialism, and ended the manifesto by an appeal to all workers: "Workers of the World, unite. You have nothing to lose but your chains, and have a world to win!"

This appeal was a call to action. Marx followed it up by ceaseless propaganda in newspapers and pamphlets and by efforts to bring the workers' organizations together. He seems to have felt that a great crisis was coming in Europe, and he wanted the workers to be ready for it so that they might take full advantage of it. According to his socialistic theory, the crisis was indeed bound to occur under the capitalistic system. Writing in a New York newspaper in 1854 Marx said:

Yet, we must not forget that a sixth power exists in Europe, maintaining at certain moments its domination over all five so-called "great powers", and causing them all to tremble. This power is revolution. After having long dwelt in quiet retirement, it is now again summoned to the field of battle by crises and starvation. . . . There is needed only a signal, and the sixth and



greatest European power will step forth in shining armour, sword in hand, like Minerva from the brow of the Olympian. The impending European war will give the signal.

Marx did not prove a correct prophet about the impending revolution in Europe. It took more than sixty years, after he wrote this, and a World War, to bring about the revolution in one part of Europe. An attempt in 1871, the Paris Commune, was mercilessly crushed.

In 1864 Marx succeeded in gathering a motley assembly in London. There were many groups calling themselves, rather vaguely, socialists. On the one side, there were democrats and patriots from several European countries under foreign rule whose belief in socialism was in something very distant and who were immediately more interested in national independence; on the other, there were the anarchists out for immediate battle. Besides Marx, the outstanding personality was that of Bakunin, the anarchist leader, who had managed to escape from Siberia three years before after many years of imprisonment. Bakunin's followers came chiefly from south Europe, the Latin countries like Italy and Spain, which were industrially backward and undeveloped. They were unemployed intellectuals and other odd revolutionary elements who found no place in the existing social order. Marx's followers came from the industrial countries, especially Germany, where the workers' conditions were better. Marx thus represented the growing and organized and relatively well-to-do working class, Bakunin the poorer, unorganized workers and intellectuals and malcontents. Marx was for patient organization and education of the workers in his socialistic theories till the hour came for action, which he expected soon enough. Bakunin and his followers were for immediate action. On the whole Marx won. An "International Working-Men's Association" was established. This was

the first of the Workers' "Internationals," as they were called.

Three years later, in 1867, Marx's great book, *Das Kapital* or "Capital," was published in German. This was the product of his long years of labour in London, and in this he analysed and criticized existing theories of economics and explained at length his own socialistic theory. It was a purely scientific work. He dealt with the development of history and economics dispassionately and scientifically, avoiding all vagueness and idealism. He discussed especially the growth of the industrial civilization of the big machine, and he drew certain far-reaching conclusions about evolution and history and the conflict of classes in human society. This new clear-cut and cogently argued socialism of Marx was therefore called "scientific socialism," as opposed to the vague "utopian" or "idealistic" socialism which had so far prevailed. Marx's *Capital* is not an easy book to read; indeed, it is about as far removed from light reading as one can imagine. But none the less it is of the select company of those few books which have affected the way of thinking of large numbers of people, changed their whole ideology, and thus influenced human development.

In 1871 came the tragedy of the Paris Commune, perhaps the first conscious socialistic revolt. This frightened European governments and made them harsher to the workers' movement. The next year there was a meeting of the Workers' "International," founded by Marx, and he succeeded in transferring the headquarters of this to New York. Marx did this apparently to get rid of the anarchist followers of Bakunin, and also perhaps because he thought that it would have a safer lodging there than under the European governments, which were angry because of the Paris Commune. But it was not possible for the International to exist so far away from its nerve centres. All its strength lay in Europe, and even

in Europe the workers' movement was having a hard time. So the First International gradually expired.

Marxism or Marxian socialism spread among European socialists, especially in Germany and Austria, where it was generally known as "social democracy." England, however, did not take to it kindly. It was too prosperous at the time for any advanced social creed. The British brand of socialism was represented by the Fabian Society with a very mild programme of distant change. The Fabians had nothing to do with the workers. They were advanced liberal intellectuals. George Bernard Shaw was one of the early Fabians. Their policy may be gathered from the famous phrase of another noted Fabian, Sidney Webb: "the inevitability of gradualness."

In France it took a dozen years' slow recovery after the Commune for socialism to become an active force again. But it took a new form there, a cross between anarchism and socialism. This was called "syndicalism" from the French *syndicat*, a working-men's organization or trade union. The socialistic theory was that the State, representing society as a whole, should own and control the means of production—that is, land and factories, etc. There was some difference of opinion as to how far this socialization should go. There are obviously many personal things like tools and domestic machines which it might be absurd to socialize. But socialists were agreed that anything which could be used for making private profit out of other people's work should be socialized, that is, made the property of the State. Syndicalists, like anarchists, did not like the State, and tried to limit its power. They wanted each industry to be controlled by the workers in that industry, by its *syndicat*. The idea was that the various syndicates would elect representatives to a general council. This council would look after the affairs of the whole country, and act as a kind of parliament for general affairs, without the power to interfere with the inner arrangements of

the industry. To bring about this state of affairs syndicalists advocated the general strike, to bring the life of the country to a standstill, and thus gain their objective. The Marxists did not approve of syndicalism at all, but, curiously enough, the syndicalists considered Marx (this was after his death) as one of themselves.

Karl Marx died in 1883. By that time powerful trade unions had grown up in England and Germany and other industrial countries. British industry had seen its best days and was declining in face of the growing competition of Germany and America. America of course had great natural advantages, which helped in rapid industrial growth. Germany was a curious mixture of political autocracy (tempered by a weak and powerless parliament) and industrial advance. The German Government under Bismarck, and even later, helped industry in many ways and tried to win over the working class by social reform which bettered their conditions. In the same way the English Liberals also passed some measures of social reform, lessening hours of work and improving the workers' lot to some extent. So long as prosperity lasted this method worked, and the English workers remained moderate and subdued and faithfully voted for the Liberals. But in the 'eighties the competition of other countries brought about an end to the long prosperous period, and a trade depression set in in England, and the wages of workers fell. So again there was an awakening of the working class, and a revolutionary spirit was in the air. Many people in England began to look to Marxism.

In 1889 another attempt was made to form a Workers' International. Many trade unions and labour parties were strong and wealthy now, with large numbers of paid officials. This International formed in 1889 (I think it was called the "Labour and Socialist International") is called the "Second International." It lasted for a quarter of a century, till the Great War came to test it and found it wanting. This

International had many people in its ranks who later took high office in their countries. Some used the labour movement for their own advancement and then deserted it. They became prime ministers and presidents and the like; they had succeeded in life; but the millions who had helped them on and had faith in them were deserted and left where they were. These leaders, even those who swore by the name of Marx or were fiery syndicalists, went into parliaments, or became well-paid trade-union chiefs, and it became more and more difficult for them to risk their comfortable positions in rash undertakings. So they quietened down, and even when the masses of the workers, forced by desperation, became revolutionary and demanded action, they tried to keep them down. Social democrats of Germany became (after the War) president and chancellor of the Republic; in France Briand, fiery syndicalist preaching the General Strike, became prime minister eleven times and crushed a strike of his old comrades; in England, Ramsay MacDonald became prime minister, and deserted his own Labour Party which had made him; so also in Sweden, Denmark, Belgium, Austria. Western Europe to-day is full of dictators and people in authority who were socialists in their earlier days, but, as they aged, they mellowed down and forgot their old enthusiasm for the cause, and sometimes even turned against their old-time colleagues. Mussolini, the Duce of Italy, [was] an old socialist; so also [was] Pilsudski, the Dictator of Poland.

The labour movement and almost every national movement for independence has often suffered by such defections of its leaders and prominent workers. They grow tired after a while, weary of non-success, and the empty crown of a martyr does not appeal for long. They quieten down and the fire of their enthusiasm takes a duller hue. Some, who are more ambitious or more unscrupulous, walk across to the other side and make individual truce with those they had so far opposed and combated. It is easy enough to reconcile

one's conscience to any step that one desires to take. The movement suffers and has a little setback by this defection, and because those who fight labour and suppress nationalities know this well, they try to win over individuals to their side by all manner of inducements and fair words. But individual preferment or fair words bring no relief to the mass of the workers or to a suppressed nation striving to be free. So despite desertions and setbacks the struggle inevitably goes on to its appointed end.

The Second International, started in 1889, grew in numbers and respectability. A few years later they turned out the anarchists under Malatesta on the ground that they refused to take advantage of the vote for parliaments. The socialists of the International showed that they preferred parliaments to association with their old comrades in a common struggle. Brave declarations were made by them as to the duty of socialists in the event of war in Europe. Socialists recognized no national boundaries so far as their work was concerned. They were not nationalists in the ordinary sense of the word. They said they would oppose war. But when war did come in 1914 the whole structure of the Second International broke up, and socialists and labour parties in each country, and even anarchists like Kropatkin, became rabid nationalists and haters of the other country, as much as any one else. Only a minority resisted, and as a consequence were made to suffer greatly in many ways, including long terms of imprisonment.

After the war was over, Lenin started a new Workers' International in Moscow in 1919. This was a purely communist organization, and only declared communists could join it. This exists now, and is called the Third International. The relics of the old Second International also gradually collected themselves together after the war. A few allied themselves to the new Moscow Third International, but most of them disliked Moscow and its creed intensely and refused

to come anywhere near it. They revived the Second International. This also exists now. So that at present there are two International Workers' organizations, briefly known as the Second and Third Internationals. Strangely enough, they both swear by Marxism, but each has its own interpretation, and yet they hate each other even more than they do their common enemy, capitalism.

These Internationals do not include all the trade unions and working men's organizations in the world. Many of them do not belong to either.

## 36. MARXISM

Socialism is of many kinds. There is general agreement, however, that it aims at the control by the State of the means of production—that is, land and mines and factories and the like—and the means of distribution, like railways, etc., and also banks and similar institutions. The idea is that individuals should not be allowed to exploit any of these methods or institutions, or the labour of others, to their own personal advantage. To-day most of these are privately owned and exploited, with the result that some people prosper and grow rich, while society as a whole suffers greatly and the masses remain poor. Also a great deal of the energy of even the owners and controllers of these means of production goes at present in fighting each other in cut-throat competition. If instead of this private war there was a sensible arranging of production and a well-thought-out distribution, waste and useless competition would be avoided, and the present great inequalities in wealth between different classes and peoples would disappear. Therefore production and distribution and other important activities should be largely socialized or con-

trolled by the State—that is, by the people as a whole. That is the basic idea of socialism.

What the State or form of government should be like under socialism is a different question into which we need not go for the moment, although it is a very important matter.

Having agreed as to the ideal of socialism, the next thing to decide is how one is to achieve it. Here socialists part company with each other, and there are many groups pointing different ways. Roughly they may be divided into two classes: (1) the slow-change, evolutionary groups, which believe in going ahead step by step and working through parliaments, like the British Labour Party and the Fabians; and (2) the revolutionary groups, which do not believe in achieving results through parliaments. These latter groups are mostly Marxist.

The former evolutionary groups are now very small in number, and even those in England are weakening and the line dividing them from the Liberals and other non-socialist groups is thinning away. So Marxism might now be considered the general socialist creed. But among Marxists also there are two main divisions in Europe—there are the Russian communists on the one hand, and the old social democrats of Germany, Austria and elsewhere on the other—and between the two there is no love lost. These social democrats lost much of their old prestige by their failure to live up to their professions during the World War and afterwards. Many of their more ardent spirits have gone over to the communists, but they still control the great trade-union machines in western Europe. Communism, because of its success in Russia, is an advancing creed. In Europe and all over the world to-day it is the chief opponent of capitalism.

What, then, is this Marxism? It is a way of interpreting history and politics and economics and human life and human desires. It is a theory as well as a call to action. It is a philosophy which has something to say about most of the activities



of man's life. It is an attempt at reducing human history, past, present and future, to a rigid logical system with something of the inevitability of fate or *kismet* about it. Whether life is so very logical, after all, and so dependent on hard-and-fast rules and systems does not seem very obvious, and many have doubted this. But Marx surveyed the past history as a scientist and drew certain conclusions from it. He saw from the earliest days man struggling for a living; it was a struggle against Nature as well as against brother-man. Man worked to get food and the other necessities of life, and his methods of doing so gradually changed as time went on, and became more complex and advanced. These methods to produce the means of living were, according to Marx, the most important thing in man's life and society's life in every age. They dominated each period of history and influenced all activities and social relations of that period, and as they changed great historical and social changes followed them. To some extent we have traced the great effects of these changes in the course of these letters. For instance, when first agriculture was introduced, it made a vast difference. The wandering nomads settled down and villages and cities grew, and because of the greater yield of agriculture, there was a surplus left over, and population grew, and wealth and leisure, which gave rise to arts and handicrafts. Another obvious instance is the Industrial Revolution, when the introduction of big machinery for production made another tremendous difference.

The methods of production at a certain period of history correspond to a definite stage in the growth of the people. In the course of this work of production, and as a consequence of it, men enter into definite relations with each other (such as barter, buying, selling, exchange and so on), which are conditioned by, and which correspond to their methods of production. These relations taken as a whole constitute the economic structure of society. And on this economic basis are built up the laws, politics, social customs, ideas and

everything else. Therefore, according to this view of Marx, as the methods of production change, the economic structure changes, and this is followed by a change in people's ideas, laws, politics, etc.

Marx also looked upon history as a record of struggles between different classes. "The history of all human society, past and present, has been the history of class struggles." The class which controls the means of production is dominant. It exploits the labour of other classes and profits by it. Those who labour do not get the full value of their labour. They get just a part of it for bare necessities, the rest, the surplus, goes to the exploiting class. So the exploiting class gets wealthier from this surplus value. The State and government are controlled by this class which controls production, and the first object of the State thus becomes one of protecting this governing class. "The State is an executive committee for managing the affairs of the governing class as a whole," says Marx. Laws are made for this purpose, and people are led to believe by means of education, religion, and other methods, that the dominance of this class is just and natural. Every attempt is made to cover the class character of the government and the laws by these methods, so that the other classes that are being exploited may not find out the true state of affairs, and thus get dissatisfied. If any person does get dissatisfied and challenges this system, he is called an enemy of society and morality, and a subverter of old-established customs, and is crushed by the State.

But in spite of all efforts, one class cannot remain permanently dominant. The very factors that gave it dominance now work against it. It had become the ruling and exploiting class because it controlled the then existing means of production. Now, as new methods of production arise, the new classes which control these come into prominence, and they refuse to be exploited. New ideas stir men; there is what might be called an ideological revolution which breaks the

fetters of the old ideas and dogmas. And then there is a struggle between this rising class and the old class which clings hard to power. The new class inevitably wins, because it controls the economic power now, and the old class, having played its part in history, fades away.

The victory of this new class is both political and economic; it symbolizes the triumph of the new methods of production. And from this follow changes in the whole fabric of society—new ideas, a new political structure, laws, customs, everything is affected. This new class becomes now the exploiting class to the classes under it, till in its turn it is displaced by one of them. So the struggle goes on, and must go on till there is no one class exploiting another. Only when classes disappear and there is only one class left will the struggle end, for then there will be no further opportunity for exploitation. This one class cannot exploit itself. Only then will there be equilibrium in society and full co-operation, instead of ceaseless struggle and competition, as at present. And the State's chief business of coercion will no longer be required, for there will be no class to coerce, and so gradually the State itself will "wither away," and thus the anarchist ideal will also be approached.

So Marx looked upon history as a grand process of evolution by inevitable class struggles. With a wealth of detail and example he showed how this had taken place in the past, how the feudal times had changed to the capitalist period with the coming of the big machine, and the feudal classes given place to the *bourgeoisie*. According to him, the last class struggle was taking place in our times between the *bourgeoisie* and the working class. Capitalism was itself producing and increasing the numbers and strength of this class, which would ultimately overwhelm it and establish the classless society and socialism.

This view of looking at history which Marx explained was called the "materialist conception of history." It was

called "materialist" because it was not "idealist," a word which was used a great deal in a special sense by philosophers in Marx's day. The idea of evolution was becoming popular at the time. Darwin, as I have told you, established it in the popular mind so far as the origin and development of species were concerned. But this did not explain in any way human social relations. Some philosophers had tried to explain human progress by vague idealistic notions of the progress of the mind. Marx said that this was a wrong approach. Vague speculation in the air and idealism were, according to him, dangerous, as in this way people were likely to imagine all manner of things which had no real basis in fact. He proceeded therefore in a scientific way, examining facts. Hence the word "materialist."

Marx constantly talks of exploitation and class struggles. Many of us become angry and excited at the injustice which we see around us. But, according to Marx, this is not a matter for anger or good virtuous advice. The exploitation is not the fault of the person exploiting. The dominance of one class over another has been the natural result of historical progress, and in due time gives place to another arrangement. If a person belonged to the dominant class, and as such exploited others, this was not a terrible sin for him. He was a part of a system, and it was absurd to call him unkind names. We are much too apt to forget this distinction between individuals and systems. The fault always lies with the system, not with individuals.

Marx did not preach class conflict. He showed that in fact it existed, and had always existed in some form or other. His object in writing *Capital* was "to lay bare the economic law of motion of modern society," and this uncovering disclosed these fierce conflicts between different classes in society. These conflicts are not always obvious as class struggles, because the dominant class always tries to hide its own class character. But when the existing order is threatened, then it

throws away all pretence and its real character appears, and there is open warfare between the classes. Forms of democracy and ordinary laws and procedure all disappear when this happens. Instead of these class struggles being due to misunderstanding or the villainy of agitators, as some people say, they are inherent in society, and they actually increase with a better understanding of the conflict of interests.

Marx's theory of history was thus of an ever-changing and advancing society. There was no fixity in it. It was a dynamic conception. And it marched on inevitably whatever might happen, one social order being replaced by another. But a social order only disappeared after it had run its course and grown to its fullest extent. When society grew beyond this, then it simply tore the clothes of the old order, which it had outgrown and which fettered it, and put on new and bigger garments.

It was man's destiny, according to Marx, to help in this grand historical process of development. All the previous stages had been passed. The last class struggle between the capitalist *bourgeois* society and the working class was now taking place. (This was, of course, in the advanced industrial countries where capitalism was fully developed. Other countries where capitalism was not developed were backward, and their struggles were therefore of a somewhat mixed and different character. But essentially even there some aspect of this struggle was taking place, as the world was becoming more and more inter-related.) Marx said that capitalism would have to face difficulty after difficulty, crisis after crisis, till it toppled over, because of its inherent want of equilibrium. But far from ending, it has survived them, and has grown more powerful, except in Russia.

It is said that capitalism managed to prolong its life to our day because of a factor which perhaps Marx did not fully consider. This was the exploitation of colonial empires by the industrial countries of the West. This gave fresh life

and prosperity to it, at the expense, of course, of the poor countries so exploited.

We condemn often enough the exploitation of the poor by the rich, of the worker by the capitalist, under present-day capitalism. This is no doubt a fact, not because of the fault of the capitalist, but because the system itself is based on such exploitation. At the same time let us not imagine that this is a new thing under capitalism. Exploitation has been the hard and invariable lot of the workers and the poor in past ages under all systems. Indeed, it can be said that, in spite of capitalist exploitation, they are better off to-day than during any past period. But that is not saying very much.

The greatest modern exponent of Marxism has been Lenin. Not only did he expound it and explain it, but he lived up to it. And yet he has warned us not to consider Marxism as a dogma which cannot be varied. Convinced of the truth of its essence, he was not prepared to accept or apply its details everywhere unthinkingly. He tells us:

In no sense do we regard the Marxist theory as something complete and unassailable. On the contrary, we are convinced that that theory is only the corner-stone of that science which socialists must advance in all directions if they do not wish to fall behind life. We think that it is especially necessary for Russian Socialists to undertake an independent study of the Marxist theory, for that theory gives only general guiding ideas, which can be applied differently in England, for instance, than in France, differently in France than in Germany, differently in Germany than in Russia.

It is well to know these theories, because they are moving vast masses of men and women to-day and they may be of help to us in our own country. A great nation, Russia, as well as the other parts of the Soviet Union, have made Marx their major prophet, and in the world's great distress to-day many

people in search of remedies look to him for possible inspiration.

I shall finish up by quoting some lines from the English poet Tennyson:

The old order changeth yielding place to new,  
And God fulfils himself in many ways,  
Lest one good custom should corrupt the world.

### 37. CIVIL WAR IN AMERICA

The Old World, with its conflicts and intrigues, its kings and its revolutions, its hates and its nationalisms, has taken up a great deal of our time. Let us now cross the Atlantic and visit the New World of America, and see how this fared after it had shaken off the grasping hand of Europe. The United States in particular demand our attention. From small beginnings they have grown and grown, till to-day they seem to dominate the world situation. England has no longer pride of place to-day; she is not the world's money-lender now, but is an unhappy debtor country, like all the others in Europe, asking the United States for kind and generous treatment. The mantle of the money-lender has fallen on America; wealth pours into her, and she breeds millionaires in surprising quantities.

The thirteen seaboard States that broke off from England in [1776] had a population of well under four millions. To-day the city of New York alone has about double that population. There are many more States now in the Union, and they extend right across the continent to the Pacific Ocean. The nineteenth century saw the growth of this great country, not only in extent and population, but also in modern industry

and commerce, wealth and influence. The States had many difficulties and troubles and some wars and entanglements with Europe, but the greatest of their trials came from a bitter and devastating civil war between the States of the North and those of the South.

Between the northern States and the southern there was a great difference from the very beginning. The northern were industrial, where the new big machine-industry spread rapidly; in the south there were large plantations worked by slave labour. Slavery was legal, but in the north it was not popular and had little importance. The South depended entirely on slave labour. The slaves were, of course, Negroes from Africa. No white people were slaves. "All men are born equal," says the Declaration of Independence, but this applied to the whites, not to the blacks.

Meanwhile an agitation grew up in the North for the total abolition of slavery. The people who were in favour of this were called the "Abolitionists," and their principal leader was William Lloyd Garrison. In 1831 Garrison brought out a paper called the *Liberator* to support his anti-slavery agitation. In the very first issue of this paper he made it clear that he was not going to compromise on this issue, and would not be moderate about it. Some of his sentences from that issue have become famous, and I shall give them to you here:

I will be as harsh as truth, and as uncompromising as justice. On this subject I do not wish to think, or speak, or write with moderation. No ! No ! tell a man whose house is on fire to give a moderate alarm; tell him to moderately rescue his wife from the hands of a ravisher; tell the mother to gradually extricate her babe from the fire into which it has fallen—but urge me not to use moderation in a cause like the present. I am in earnest—I will not equivocate—I will not excuse—I will not retreat a single inch—and I will be heard.

This brave attitude was, however, confined to a small



minority. Most of those who opposed slavery did not want to interfere with it where it already existed. Still the tension grew between the North and the South, for this was due to their different economic interests, which conflicted especially on the tariff question.

In 1860 Abraham Lincoln was elected President of the United States, and his election was a signal for the South to break away. He was opposed to slavery, but even so he had made it clear that there would be no interference with it where it existed. He was not prepared to see it extended to new States or to give it legality. The South was not appeased by this assurance, and State after State seceded from the Union. The United States were going to pieces. Such was the terrible position that faced the new President. He made another effort to win over the South and prevent this break-up. He gave them all manner of assurances about allowing slavery to go on; he even said that he was prepared to make it (where it existed) a part of the constitution, which would give it permanence. In fact, he was prepared to go to almost any length for peace, but one thing he would not agree to, and that was the break-up of the Union. He denied absolutely the right of any State to withdraw from the Union.

Lincoln's attempts to avoid Civil War failed. The South had decided to break away, and eleven States did so, while some other border States also sympathized with them. The seceding States called themselves the "Confederate States" and elected their own President, Jefferson Davis. In April 1861 the Civil War began, and it lasted for four weary years, during which many a brother fought against his brother and many a friend against a friend. Huge armies grew up as the war continued. The North had many advantages; it had a much bigger population and greater wealth. Being a manufacturing and industrial area, its resources were far greater, and it had more railways. But the South had the better soldiers and generals, especially General Lee, and all the early vic-

tories went to the South. But ultimately the South was worn out. The Northern navy cut off the South completely from its market in Europe, and cotton and tobacco could not be exported. This crippled the South, but it also had a disastrous result on Lancashire, where many mills had to stop working because there was no cotton. There was great distress among the workers thrown out of employment in Lancashire.

English opinion about the war was generally in sympathy with the South, or at any rate the opinion of the wealthier classes was in favour of the South. The radical elements favoured the North.

Slavery was not the principal cause of the Civil War. As I have told you, to the last Lincoln gave assurances that he would respect slavery wherever it existed. The real trouble arose from the different and somewhat conflicting economic interests of the North and South. Even after war had begun, Lincoln made no clear pronouncement about slavery, as he was afraid of irritating many people in the North who were in favour of it. As the war went on, he became more definite. He proposed first that Congress should free the slaves after giving compensation to the owners. Later he gave up this idea of compensation, and finally, in September 1862, he issued the Proclamation of Emancipation, in which it was declared that the slaves in all the States in rebellion against the government should be free on and after January 1st, 1863. The principal reason for issuing this proclamation was probably the desire to weaken the South in the war. It resulted in 4,000,000 slaves being freed, and it was no doubt hoped that these would create trouble in the Confederate States.

The Civil War ended in 1865, after the South was thoroughly exhausted. War at any time is a terrible affair, but civil war is often more horrible still. The burden of four years of this awful struggle fell most of all on the President, Lincoln, and the result was largely due to his cool determination to persevere in spite of all disappointments and disasters.

He was out not only to win, but to do so with as little ill-will as possible, so that the Union for which he was fighting might be a real union of hearts, and not a forced one. So, having won the war, he set out to be generous to the defeated South. But within a few days a crank shot him dead.

Abraham Lincoln is one of the greatest of American heroes. He has also taken his place among the world's great men. His beginnings were quite humble; he had little schooling, such education as he had was mostly his own work, and yet he grew up a great statesman and a great orator, and steered his country through a great crisis.

After Lincoln's death the American Congress was not as generous to the Southern Whites as he might have been. These Southern Whites were penalized in some ways and many were disfranchised—that is, their votes were taken away. On the other hand, the Negroes were given full rights as citizens, and this was made part of the American constitution. It was also laid down that no State could disfranchise a man on account of his race, colour, or previous slavery.

The Negroes were now legally free and had the vote. But this did them little good, for their economic status remained the same. All the freed Negroes were wholly without property, and it became a problem to know what to do with them. Some migrated to the northern towns, but most of them remained where they were, as much under the thumb of their old white masters in the South as ever. They worked as wage-labourers in the old plantations on such wages as the white employers would give them. The Southern Whites also organized themselves to keep down the Negroes in every way by terrorism. An extraordinary semi-secret organization, called the "Ku Klux Klan," was formed, and its members went about in masks terrorizing the Negroes and preventing them from even voting at the elections.

During the last half-century the Negroes have made some progress. Many own property, and they have some fine edu-

cational institutions. But they are still very definitely the subject race. They are about 10 per cent of the total population. Wherever they are in small numbers they are tolerated, as in parts of the North. Everywhere they are segregated and kept apart from the Whites—in hotels, restaurants, churches, colleges, parks, bathing-beaches, trams, and even in stores! In railways they have to travel in special carriages called “Jim-Crow cars.” Marriage between the White and the Negro is forbidden by law. Indeed, there are all manner of strange laws. A law passed by the State of Virginia as recently as 1926 prohibited white and coloured persons from sitting on the same floor!

### 38. SEVEN HUNDRED YEARS OF CONFLICT BETWEEN IRELAND AND ENGLAND

Let us cross the Atlantic again and go back to the Old World. The first land that a traveller by sea or air sees is that of Ireland; let us therefore make this our first stop. This green and beautiful island dips into the Atlantic Ocean on the far west of Europe. It is a small island, lying away from the main currents of world history; but little as it is, it is full of romance, and for centuries past it has shown invincible courage and spirit of sacrifice in the struggle for national freedom. Ireland has put up an amazing record of perseverance in this struggle against a powerful neighbour. The quarrel began over seven hundred and fifty years ago, and it is not settled yet! We have seen British imperialism in action in India, China, and elsewhere. But Ireland has had to bear the brunt of it from the earliest days. Yet she has never willingly submitted to it, and

almost every generation has seen a rebellion against England. The bravest of her sons have died fighting for freedom or been executed by the English authorities. Vast numbers of Irishmen have left the home that they loved so passionately and emigrated to foreign countries. Many joined foreign armies that were fighting England, so that thus they might have a chance of pitting their strength against the country which was dominating and oppressing their homeland. The exiles of Ireland spread out in many distant countries, and wherever they went they carried a bit of Ireland in their hearts.

Unhappy individuals and oppressed and struggling countries, all those who are dissatisfied and have little joy in the present, have a way of looking back to the past and searching for consolation in it. They magnify this past and find comfort in thinking of bygone greatness. When the present is full of gloom, the past becomes a haven of refuge giving relief and inspiration. Old grievances also rankle and are not forgotten. This ever looking backward is not a sign of health in a nation. Healthy people and healthy countries act in the present and look to the future. But a person or nation which is not free cannot be healthy, and so it is natural that he or it should look back and live partly in the past.

Irish people treasure the memory of the old days and remember vividly her many struggles for freedom. They look back, fourteen hundred years ago, to the sixth century after Christ, when Ireland was a centre of learning for western Europe and drew students from afar. The Roman Empire had fallen and Vandals and Huns had crushed Roman civilization. In those days, it is said, Ireland was one of the places which kept the lamp of culture burning till a fresh revival of culture took place in Europe. Christianity came early to Ireland. Ireland's patron saint, St. Patrick, is supposed to have brought it. It was from Ireland that it spread to the north of England. In Ireland many monasteries were founded and, like the old *ashrams* in India and the Buddhist monasteries,

these became centres of learning, where teaching often took place in the open air. From these monasteries went out missionaries to northern and western Europe to preach the new religion of Christianity to the heathen. Beautiful manuscripts were written and illuminated by some of the monks in the Irish monasteries. There is kept in Dublin now one such beautiful manuscript book called the *Book of Kells*, probably written about twelve hundred years ago.

This period of two hundred or three hundred years, from the sixth century onwards, is looked upon by many Irishmen as a kind of Golden Age of Ireland when Gaelic culture was at its height. Probably the distance in time lends an enchantment to these old days and makes them seem greater than they actually were. Ireland was split up among many tribes then, and these tribes were continually fighting each other. The weakness of Ireland, as of India, was mutual strife. Then came the Danes and Norsemen and, as in England and France, harried the Irish and took possession of large territories. Early in the eleventh century an Irish king, Brian Boruma, who became famous, defeated the Danes and united Ireland for a while, but the country split up again after his death.

You will remember that the Normans under William the Conqueror conquered England in the eleventh century. A hundred years later these Anglo-Normans invaded Ireland, and the part they conquered was called the "Pale," from which probably has come the common expression "beyond the pale," meaning outside a privileged circle or a social group. This Anglo-Norman invasion in 1169 hit the old Gaelic civilization hard, and it was the beginning of almost continuous war with the Irish tribes. These wars, which lasted for hundreds of years, were barbarous and cruel in the extreme. The English (as the Anglo-Normans might be called now) always looked down upon the Irish as a kind of semi-savage race. There was the difference of race, the English

being Anglo-Saxons, the Irish Celts; later came the difference in religion, the English and Scotch becoming Protestants, and the Irish remaining faithful to Roman Catholicism. So these Anglo-Irish wars had all the bitterness of racial and religious wars. The English deliberately prevented the two races from mixing. A law was even passed (a statute of Kilkenny) prohibiting intermarriages between the English and Irish.

Rebellion followed rebellion in Ireland, and each was crushed with great cruelty. The Irish naturally hated their foreign rulers and oppressors, and rose in rebellion whenever they had the chance and even without it. "England's difficulty is Ireland's opportunity" is an old saying, and both for political and religious reasons Ireland often sided with England's enemies, like France and Spain. This enraged the English greatly and gave them a feeling of being stabbed in the back, and they retaliated with all manner of atrocities.

In Queen Elizabeth's time it was decided to break the resistance of the rebellious Irish natives by planting English landlords among them to keep them down. So land was confiscated, and the old Irish landowning classes had to give place to foreigners. Thus Ireland became practically a peasant nation with foreign landlords. And these landlords remained foreign to the Irish people even after the lapse of hundreds of years.

In their poverty the landlord-ridden and rack-rented Irish tenantry had made the potato their chief article of diet. They practically lived on potatoes and, like the Indian peasantry to-day, they had no reserves; there was nothing to fall back upon. They lived on the verge of existence, and had no powers of resistance left. In 1846 the potato crop failed, and this resulted in a great famine. But despite the famine the landlords turned out their tenantry for non-payment of rent. Large numbers of Irishmen left their homes for America and other countries, and Ireland became almost a depopulated

land. Many of her fields were tilled no longer and became pasture-lands.

This process of conversion of agricultural land that was ploughed into pasture-land for sheep was continuous in Ireland for over one hundred years and right up to our times. The principal reason for this was the growth of factories in England for the manufacture of woollen textiles. The more machinery was used the greater the production and the more wool was required. It was more profitable for the landlords in Ireland to have pasture-lands for sheep rather than tilled fields with men working in them. Pasture-lands require very few workers, just a handful to look after the sheep. The agricultural workers thus became superfluous and were turned out by the landlords. Thus Ireland, which was in reality thinly populated, always had "superfluous" workers, and the process of depopulation went on. Ireland became just an area to supply raw material to "industrial" England.

After the national rising of 1798 there was no big rebellion in Ireland for over one hundred years. The nineteenth century, unlike previous centuries, was free from this periodical occurrence in Ireland. But this was not due to a feeling of contentment. There was the exhaustion of the last rising and of the great famine, and the depopulation. To some extent, in the latter half of the century, people's minds were also turned to the British Parliament in the hope that the Irish members there might be able to do something. But still some Irishmen wanted to keep alive the tradition of a periodical rising. Only so, they thought, could the spirit and soul of Ireland remain fresh and unsullied.



## 39. THE RUSSIA OF THE TSARS

Russia to-day is a Soviet country, and its government is run by representatives of the workers and peasants. But right through the nineteenth century and before, Russia was the most backward and reactionary country in Europe. The purest forms of autocracy and authoritarianism flourished there; in spite of revolutions and changes in western Europe, the theory of the divine right of kings was still upheld by the Tsars. Even the Church, which was the old orthodox Greek Church and not the Roman or Protestant, was perhaps even more authoritarian than elsewhere, and it was a prop and a tool of the Tsarist government. "Holy Russia" the country was called, and the Tsar was the "Little White Father" of everybody, and these legends were used by the Church and the authorities to befog people's minds and turn their attention from political and economic conditions. Holiness has kept strange company in the course of history!

The typical symbol of this "Holy Russia" was the *knout*, and a frequent occupation was *pogroms*—two words which Tsarist Russia presented to the world. The *knout* was a whip used to punish serfs and others. *Pogrom* means devastation and organized persecution; in effect it meant massacres, especially of the Jews. And behind Tsarist Russia were the vast lonely steppes of Siberia, a name which had come to be associated with exile and prison and despair. Large numbers of political convicts were sent to Siberia, and big exile camps and colonies grew up, and near each of them were the graves of suicides. Long and lonely terms of exile and prison are hard to bear, and the mind of many a brave person has given way and the body broken down under the strain. To live cut off from the world and far away from one's friends

and companions and those who share one's hopes and lighten one's burden, one must have strength of mind, and inner depths which are calm and steady, and the courage to endure. So Tsarist Russia struck down every head that was raised and crushed every attempt to gain freedom. Even travelling was made difficult, so that liberal ideas might not come from abroad. But freedom repressed has a way of adding compound interest to itself, and when it moves forward, its progress is likely to be in jumps, which upset the old apple-cart.

[To go back to history:—At the end of the 14th century] the Mongols were driven away from Russia by the Russian princes under the leadership of the Prince of Moscow. The Princes of Moscow gradually became the autocratic rulers of the whole country and began to call themselves Tsars (or Cæsars). Their outlook and customs remained largely Mongolian, and there was little in common between them and western Europe, which considered Russia as barbarous. In 1689 came Tsar Peter to the throne, called Peter the Great. He decided to make Russia face west, and he went on a long tour of European countries to study conditions there. He copied much that he saw and imposed his ideas of westernization on his reluctant and ignorant nobility. The masses, of course, were very backward and repressed, and there was no question for Peter as to what they thought of his reforms. Peter saw that the great nations of his day were strong on the sea, and he realized the importance of sea-power. But Russia, huge as it was, had then no outlet on the sea except in the Arctic Ocean, which was not much good. So he pushed north-west to the Baltic and south to the Crimea. He did not reach the Crimea (his successors did that), but he got to the Baltic after defeating Sweden. He founded a new westernized city, called St. Petersburg, on the Neva, off the Gulf of Finland, which led to the Baltic Sea.

He made this his capital, and so tried to break with the old traditions which clung to Moscow. Peter died in 1725.

More than half a century later, in 1782, another Russian ruler tried to "westernize" the country. This was a woman, Catherine II, also called the Great. She was an extraordinary woman, strong, cruel, able, and with a very unsavoury reputation about her personal life. Having disposed of her husband, the Tsar, by murder, she became the Autocrat of all the Russias and ruled for fourteen years. She posed as a great patron of culture and tried to make friends with Voltaire, with whom she corresponded. The French Court at Versailles was copied by her to some extent, and some educational reforms were introduced. But all this was at the top and for show purposes. Culture cannot be copied suddenly; it has to take root. A backward nation merely aping advanced nations changes the gold and silver of real culture into tinsel. The culture of western Europe was based on certain social conditions. Peter and Catherine, without trying to produce these conditions, tried to copy the superstructure, with the result that the burden of these changes fell on the masses and actually strengthened serfdom and the Tsar's autocracy.

So in Tsarist Russia an ounce of progress went hand in hand with a ton of reaction. The Russian peasants were practically slaves. They were tied to their lands and could not leave them without special permission. Education was limited to some officers and intellectuals, all drawn from the landed gentry. There was practically no middle class, and the masses were entirely illiterate and backward. In the past there had been frequent and bloody peasant revolts, blind revolts due to too much oppression, and they had been crushed. Now, with a bit of education at the top, some of the prevalent ideas of western Europe also trickled through. Those were the days of the French Revolution and then of Napoleon. Napoleon's fall resulted in reaction all over Europe, and Tsar Alexander I, with his "Holy Alliance" of emperors, was

the champion of this reaction. His successor was even worse. Stung into action, a group of young officers and intellectuals rose in rebellion in 1825. They all belonged to the landowning class and had no backing in the masses or the army; they were crushed. They are called "Decembrists," because their revolt took place in December, 1825. This revolt is the first outward sign of political awakening in Russia. It was preceded by secret political societies, as every kind of public political activity was prevented by the Tsar's government. These secret societies continued and revolutionary ideas began to spread, especially among the intellectuals and university students.

After Russia's defeat in the Crimean War, some reforms were introduced, and in 1861 serfdom was abolished. This was a great thing for the peasantry, and yet it did not bring them much relief, for the freed serfs were not given enough land to support them. Meanwhile, the spread of revolutionary ideas among the intelligentsia and their repression by the Tsar's government went on side by side. There was no link or common ground between these advanced intellectuals and the peasantry. So, in the early seventies, the socialistically inclined (they were all very vague and idealistic) students decided to carry their propaganda to the peasantry, and thousands of students descended upon the villages. The peasants did not know these students. They distrusted them and suspected some plot perhaps to restore serfdom. And so these peasants actually arrested many of these students, who had come at the peril of their lives, and handed them over to the Tsar's police! This was an extraordinary example of trying to work in the air without being in touch with the masses.

This utter want of success with the peasantry was a great shock to these student intellectuals, and, in disgust and despair, they took to what is called "terrorism," that is, throwing bombs and otherwise trying to kill those in authority. This

was the beginning in Russia of terrorism and the cult of the bomb, and with it revolutionary activities took a new phase. These bomb-throwers called themselves "Liberals with a bomb," and their terrorist organization was named "Will of the People." This name was pretentious, as the people concerned were relatively small groups.

Thus began the new contest between these groups of determined young men and women and the Tsar's government. The revolutionary forces were swelled by the addition of people from the many subject races and national minorities in Russia. All these races and minorities were ill-treated by the government. They were not allowed to make public use of their own languages, and in many other ways they were harassed and humiliated.

While all this was happening, the Russian dominions were continually spreading eastwards and they eventually reached the Pacific. In Central Asia they came to the frontiers of Afghanistan, and in the south they were pushing away at the Turkish frontier. Another important development, from the sixties onwards, was the rise of western industry. This was limited to a few areas only, like the Petersburg neighbourhood, and in Moscow, and the country as a whole remained completely agricultural. But the factories that were put up were quite up-to-date, and were usually under English management. Two results followed. Russian capitalism developed rapidly in these few industrial areas, and a working class also grew equally rapidly. As in the early days of the British factory system, the Russian workers were terribly exploited, and made to work almost night and day. But there was this difference. New ideas had now arisen, ideas of socialism and communism, and the Russian worker had a fresh mind and was receptive to these ideas. The British worker, with a long tradition behind him, had grown conservative and tied to old ideas.

These new ideas began to take shape, and a "Social Democratic Labour Party" was formed. This was based on the Marxist philosophy. These Marxists declared themselves against acts of terrorism. According to the theories of Karl Marx the working class had to be roused to action, and only by such mass action could they achieve their goal. The killing of individuals by terrorism would not move the working class to such action, for the goal was the overthrow of Tsarism, and not the assassination of the Tsar or his ministers.

As early as the 'eighties a young man, later to become known all over the world as Lenin,\* had participated in revolutionary activities even as a student at school. In 1887, when he was seventeen, he had to face a terrible blow. His elder brother Alexander, to whom Lenin was greatly attached, was executed on the scaffold for taking part in a terroristic attempt on the Tsar's life. In spite of the shock, Lenin said even then that freedom was not to be obtained by methods of terrorism; the way was through mass action only. And, grimly and with set teeth, this young man went on with his school work, appeared for his final school examination, and passed with distinction. Such was the stuff of which the leader and maker of the revolution of thirty years later was made!

Marx used to think that the working-class revolution which he predicted would begin in a highly industrialized country, like Germany, with a big and organized working class. He considered Russia as the most unlikely place for this because of its backwardness and medievalism. But in Russia he found faithful followers among the young, who studied him with a passion for finding out what they should do to put an end to their intolerable condition. The very fact that in Tsarist Russia no open activity or constitutional methods were open to them drove them to this study and to discussion among themselves. These were sent in large numbers to prison, to

\* His real name was Vladimir Ilyitch Ulyanov, born in 1870.

Siberia, or exile abroad. Wherever they went they continued this study of Marxism and their preparation for the day of action.

#### 40. THE END OF AN EPOCH: 1914!

The nineteenth century! What a long time we have been held up by these hundred years! It was a fascinating period. Nineteen hundred and fourteen! It was in that year that the dogs of war, as the saying goes, were let loose on Europe and the world. That year forms a turning-point in history. It is the close of one epoch and the beginning of another.

The dominant feature of this period was, as we have seen, the growth of capitalistic industry by large-scale power production—that is, production with the help of some mechanical power, like water, steam, or electricity (we have the name “power-house” for an electricity-generating plant). Capitalistic industry was dynamic; by its very nature it grew bigger and bigger and its hunger was never satisfied. Its distinguishing mark was acquisitiveness; it was always out to acquire and hold, and then acquire again. Individuals tried to do so, and so did nations. The society that grew up under this system is therefore called an acquisitive society. The aim was always to produce more and more, and to apply the surplus wealth thus produced to the building of more factories and railways and such-like undertakings, and also, of course, to enrich the owners. In the pursuit of this aim everything else was sacrificed.

So capitalism went blindly and ruthlessly forward, leaving many victims in its trail. None the less its march was a triumphant progress. Aided by science, it succeeded in many

things, and this success dazzled the world, and seemed to atone for much of the misery it had caused. Incidentally, and without planning deliberately for them, it also produced many of the good things of life. But underneath the bright surface and the good there was plenty of bad. Indeed, the most remarkable thing about it was the contrasts it produced, and the more it grew the greater were these contrasts: extreme poverty and extreme wealth; slum and skyscraper; empire-state and dependent exploited colony. Europe was the dominant continent, and Asia and Africa the exploited ones. For the greater part of the century America was outside the currents of world events, but it was going ahead rapidly and building up vast resources.

Capitalism shook up the world, and in spite of the terrible human misery it caused, it was, on the whole, a beneficent movement, at any rate in the West. It brought in its train great material progress and raised tremendously the standards of human well-being. The common man became far more important than he had ever been. In practice he did not have much of a say in anything, in spite of an illusory vote, but in theory his status grew in the State, and with this his self-respect increased. There was a vast accumulation of knowledge, and science did wonders, and its thousand applications to life made life easier for everybody. Medicine, especially in its preventive aspects, and sanitation, began to suppress and root out many diseases which had been a curse to man.

Perhaps the most striking feature of the century was the progress in the methods of transportation and communication. The railway and the steamship and the electric telegraph and the motor-car changed the world completely, and made it for all human purposes a vastly different place from what it had always been. The world shrank, and its inhabitants grew nearer to each other, and could see much more of each other, and, with mutual knowledge, many barriers, born of ignorance, went down. Common ideas began to spread which



produced some measure of uniformity all over the world. Right at the end of the period we are discussing came wireless telegraphy and flying. People had often gone up in balloons, but no one, except in old myths and stories, the flying carpets of the Arabian Nights, and the *wrankhatola* of our Indian stories, had gone up on anything which was heavier than air. The first persons to succeed in going up in a heavier-than-air machine, the parent of the present aeroplane, were two American brothers, Wilbur and Orville Wright. They flew less than 300 yards in December 1903, but, even so, they had done something which had not been done before. After that there was continuous progress in flying, and I remember the excitement that was caused in 1909 when the Frenchman Blériot flew over the English Channel from France to England. Soon afterwards I saw the first aeroplane fly over the Eiffel Tower in Paris. And many years later, in May 1927, Charles Lindbergh came like a silver arrow flashing across the Atlantic and landed at Le Bourget, the aerodrome of Paris.

All this goes to the credit side of this period when capitalistic industry was dominant. Man certainly did wonderful things during this century. And one thing more to the credit side. As capitalism grew, a check to it was devised in the co-operative movement. This was a combination of people to buy or sell goods in common and divide up the profits among themselves. The co-operative way was based on mutual co-operation. The co-operative movement grew greatly in Europe in the nineteenth century. Perhaps it succeeded most in the little country of Denmark.

On the political side there was a growth of democratic ideas, and more and more people got the right to vote for their parliaments and assemblies. But this franchise, or right to vote, was limited to men, and women, however capable they might otherwise be, were not considered good or wise enough to have this right. Many women resented this, and in

England a great agitation was organized by the women during the early years of the twentieth century. The woman suffrage movement this was called, and because men did not treat it seriously and paid little attention to it, the women suffragettes took to forcible and even violent methods to compel attention. They upset the business of Parliament by creating "scenes" and bodily attacked British Cabinet Ministers, so that these ministers had to be under continual police protection. Organized violence on a big scale also took place, and many women were sent to gaol, where they started hunger-striking. Thereupon they were let out, and as soon as they got well again they were put back in prison. Parliament passed a special law to permit this being done, and this was popularly called the "Cat and Mouse Act." These methods of the suffragettes, however, were certainly successful in attracting widespread attention. A few years later, after the World War began, women's right to the vote was recognized.

The women's movement, or the feminist movement as it is often called, was not confined to asking for votes. Equality with men in everything was demanded. The position of women in the West was very bad till quite recent times. They had few rights. English women could not even own property under the law, the husband took the lot, even his wife's earnings. They were thus even worse off legally than women are to-day under Hindu law, and that is bad enough. Women in the West were, indeed, a subject race, as in a host of ways Indian women are now. Long before the agitation for votes began, women had demanded equal treatment with men in other respects. At length, in the 'eighties, in England they were given some rights as to owning property. Women succeeded in this partly because factory-owners favoured it; they thought that if women could keep their earnings, this would be an inducement for them to work in the factories.

On every side we note great changes, but not so in the

ways of governments. The great Powers continued to follow the methods of intrigue and deception recommended long ago by the Florentine Machiavelli, and eighteen hundred years before him by the Indian minister, Chanakya. There was ceaseless rivalry between them, and secret treaties and alliances, and each Power was always trying to overreach the other. Europe, as we have seen, played the active and aggressive rôle; Asia the passive.

With the growth of nationalism the idea of "my country right or wrong" developed, and nations gloried in doing things which, in the case of individuals, were considered bad and immoral. Thus a strange contrast grew between the morality of individuals and that of nations. There was a vast difference between the two, and the very vices of individuals became the virtues of nations. Selfishness, greed, arrogance, vulgarity were considered utterly bad and intolerable in the case of individual men and women. But in the case of large groups, of nations, they were praised and encouraged under the noble cloak of patriotism and love of country. Even murder and killing become praiseworthy if large groups of nations undertake it against one another. A recent author has told us that "civilization has become a device for delegating the vices of individuals to larger and larger communities."

#### 41. WAR: 1914-1918

What shall I write about this war, the World War, the Great War, as it is called, which for over four years devastated Europe and some parts of Asia and Africa, and wiped away millions of young men in their prime? War is not a pleasant subject to contemplate. It is an ugly thing, but often it is praised and painted in bright colours; and it

is said that, like the fire which purifies precious metals, war purifies and strengthens indolent nations, grown soft and corrupt by too much ease and love of living. Instances of high courage and moving sacrifice are pointed out to us, as if war were the parent of these virtues.

I have tried to examine some of the causes of this war: how the greed of industrial countries, the rivalries of imperialist Powers, clashed, and made conflict inevitable. So these people plunged into the war, and, at their bidding, and that of elderly politicians representing them and their class, the youth of the nations rushed at each other's throats. The vast majority of these young men, and the common people of all the countries concerned, knew nothing of these causes which had led to the war. They were really not concerned, and whether success came or failure, they stood to lose by it. It was a rich man's game played with the lives of the people, and mostly of the young. But there could be no war unless the common people were prepared to fight. In all the Continental countries there was conscription or compulsory service. But even compulsion cannot force all the people in such a matter if they are really unwilling as a whole.

So elaborate efforts were made to whip up the enthusiasm and the love of country of the people in all the warring nations. Each party called the other the "aggressor," and pretended to fight in self-defence only. Germany said that she was surrounded by a ring of enemies who were trying to strangle her. She accused Russia and France of taking the initiative in invading her. England based her action on a righteous defence of little Belgium, whose neutrality had been grossly violated by Germany. All the countries involved took up a self-righteous attitude and laid all the blame on the enemy. Each people was made to believe that their freedom was in danger and they must fight to defend it. The newspapers especially took a great part in creating this war atmos-

phere everywhere, which meant in effect bitter hatred of the people of the enemy countries.

So strong was this wave of hysteria that it swept everything before it. It was easy enough to rouse mass passions in the crowd; but even people of intellect and intelligence, men and women who were supposed to have a calm and equable temperament, thinkers, writers, professors, scientists—all of them, in all the countries involved, lost their balance and became filled with blood-lust and hatred of the enemy peoples. The clergymen, the men of religion, who are supposed to be men of peace, were as bloodthirsty as the others. Even pacifists and socialists lost their heads and forgot their principles. All—but not quite all. A tiny minority of people in each country refused to become hysterical, and would not allow themselves to be smitten by this war fever. They were jeered at and called cowards, and many were even sent to prison for refusal to do war service. Some of these were socialists, some were religious people, like the Quakers, who have conscientious objections to war.

As soon as the war began, the governments of the various countries made it the excuse for suppressing truth and spreading all manner of lies. The personal liberties of the people were also suppressed. The other side was, of course, completely shut out. So that the people only got to know one side of the story, and that a greatly distorted and often completely false account. It was not difficult to fool the people in this way.

Even in peace-time narrow nationalist propaganda and the distortions of newspapers had fooled the people and prepared the ground for war. War itself had been glorified. In Germany, or rather in Prussia, this glorification of war became the definite philosophy of the rulers, from the Kaiser downwards. Learned books were written to justify it and to prove that war was a "biological necessity"—that is, it was necessary to human life and progress. The Kaiser received a lot of

publicity because he was always posing rather crudely in the limelight. But similar ideas prevailed in military and other upper-class circles in England and other countries. Ruskin \* is one of the great writers of the nineteenth century in England. He is a favourite author of Gandhiji's. This man of undoubted nobility of mind has written in one of his books:

I found, in brief, that all great nations learned their truth of words, and strength of thought, in war, and wasted by peace; taught by war, and deceived by peace; trained by war and betrayed by peace; in a word, that they were born in war, and expired in peace.

To show what a frank imperialist Ruskin was, I shall give you another quotation from him:

That is what she [England] must do or perish: she must found colonies . . . seizing every piece of fruitful waste ground she can set foot on, and there teaching these her colonists that their first . . . aim is to advance the power of England by land or sea.

And one other quotation. This is from the book of an English officer who became a major-general in the British army. He points out that victory in war is almost impossible "except by deliberate falsehood, by acting a falsehood, or by prevarication." According to him, any citizen who "refuses to adopt these measures . . . deliberately acts the part of a traitor to his comrades and subordinates" and "can only be termed a most despicable coward." "Morality; immorality—what are such things to great nations when their fate is at stake?" A nation "must strike and strike again until its adversary receives its death-blow." I wonder what Ruskin would have said to all this! Do not imagine, of course, that this is a fair specimen of the English mind, or that the Kaiser's

\* John Ruskin (1819-1900).

bombastic utterances represented the average German. But the misfortune is that people who think are so often in authority, and in war-time, almost invariably, they come to the front.

Usually such frank avowals are not made publicly, and war is made to put on a sanctimonious garb. So, while a tremendous massacre was going on over hundreds of miles of battle-front in Europe and elsewhere, fine high-sounding phrases were manufactured at home to justify the killing and delude the people. It was a war for freedom and honour; the "war to end war"; to make democracy safe; for self-determination, and the freedom of small nations, and so on. Meanwhile many of the financiers and industrialists and makers of war material, who sat at home, and patriotically used these fine phrases to induce the young to jump into the furnace of war, made vast profits and became millionaires.

As the war went on from month to month and year to year, more and more countries were dragged into it. Both sides tried to win over neutrals by offering bribes secretly; any such public offer would have put an end to the high ideals and the fine phrases which were shouted from the house-tops.

So the war went on, month after month, consuming human lives as a forest fire consumes hordes of locusts, and as it went on, it became more destructive and barbarous. The Germans introduced poison gas, and soon both sides were using it. Aeroplanes came into greater use as bomb-throwers, and then came, first on the British side, the "tanks," huge mechanical monsters, crawling over everything like caterpillars. Men died by the hundred thousand on the fronts, and behind them, in the home countries, women and children suffered from hunger and privation. In Germany and Austria especially, because of the blockade, starvation grew terrible. It became a test of endurance. Which side would outlast the other in this ordeal? Would either army wear out the other?

Would the Allied blockade of Germany break her spirit? Or would the German submarine campaign starve England and break her spirit and morale? Behind each country lay a gigantic record of sacrifice and suffering. Was all this terrible sacrifice and suffering in vain, people wondered? Are we to forget our dead and give in to the enemy? The pre-war days seemed remote, even the causes of the war were forgotten; only one thing remained to obsess the minds of men and women, the desire for revenge and victory.

The call of the dead, who have sacrificed themselves in a cause they held dear, is a terrible thing. Who that has any spirit in him or her can resist it? Darkness reigned everywhere during these last years of war, and there was sorrow in every home in the warring countries, and a weariness, and disillusion, yet what could one do but hold the torch aloft? Read this moving poem, written by a British officer, Major McCrae,\* and try to imagine how it must have affected the men and women of his race who read it in those black and dreary war days. And remember that similar poems were written in various countries and in many languages.

We are the Dead. Short days ago  
 We lived, felt dawn, saw sunset glow,  
 Loved and were loved, and now we lie  
In Flanders Fields.

Take up our quarrel with the foe:  
 To you from failing hands we throw  
 The Torch; be yours to hold it high.  
 If ye break faith with us who die  
 We shall not sleep, though Poppies grow  
In Flanders Fields.

The long years of war brutalized the warring nations.

\* John McCrae (1872-1918).



They destroyed the moral sense of large numbers of people, and made many normal persons into half criminals. People got used to violence and to deliberate distortion of facts, and were filled with hatred and the spirit of revenge.

What was the balance-sheet of the war? I shall give you some figures to impress on you what modern war means.

The total casualties of the war have been calculated as follows:—

Known dead soldiers . . . .	10,000,000
Presumed dead soldiers . . . .	3,000,000
Dead civilians . . . . .	13,000,000
Wounded . . . . .	20,000,000
Prisoners . . . . .	3,000,000
War orphans . . . . .	9,000,000
War widows . . . . .	5,000,000
Refugees . . . . .	10,000,000

Look at these tremendous figures and try to imagine the human suffering that underlies them. Add them up: the total of dead and wounded alone comes to 46,000,000.\*

And the cost in hard cash? They are still counting it! An American estimate gives the total expenditure on the Allied side as £40,999,600,000—nearly forty-one thousand million pounds; and on the German side as £15,122,300,000—over fifteen thousand million pounds. Grand total, over fifty-six thousand million pounds! These figures cannot be fully understood by us, as they are so utterly out of proportion to our daily life. They seem to remind us of astronomical figures

\* Robert Ergang, *Europe In Our Time, 1914 to the Present* (1953), p. 86: "More men were killed in the First World War than in all the European wars that had been fought since the outbreak of the French Revolution in 1789. It is estimated that of the sixty-five million who were mobilized, eight and a half million were killed or died of illness and more than twenty-one million were wounded. In addition there were nine million estimated civilian deaths from causes related to the war."

like the distance to the sun or the stars. It is not surprising that the old warring nations, victors and vanquished alike, are still hopelessly involved in the after-effects of war finance.

The "war to end war," and "make the world safe for democracy," and "ensure the freedom of small nationalities," and for "self-determination," and generally for freedom and high ideals, was over; and England, France, America, Italy, and their smaller satellites (Russia was of course out of it) had triumphed. How these high and noble ideas were translated into practice we shall see later. Meanwhile, we might repeat the lines which the English poet Southey wrote about another and an older victory.

"And everybody praised the Duke  
     Who this great fight did win."  
 "But what good came of it at last?"  
     Quoth little Peterkin.  
 "Why, that I cannot tell," said he,  
     "But 'twas a famous victory."

## 42. THE BOLSHEVIK REVOLUTION

Already in 1914 the urban working class in Russia was waking up and becoming revolutionary again. There were numerous political strikes. Then came the war, and this absorbed all attention, and the most advanced workers were sent to the front as soldiers. Lenin and his group (most of the leaders were in exile outside Russia) opposed the war from the very beginning. They were not carried away by it like most of the socialists of other countries. They called it a capitalists' war, with which the working class had no

concern except in so far as they could profit by it to win their own freedom.

The Russian army in the field met with terrible losses, probably the greatest of all the armies involved. The Russian generals were, even for military men, who are not usually supposed to be endowed with much intelligence, remarkably incompetent. Russian soldiers, ill equipped with arms and often with no ammunition and no supports, were hurled at the enemy and sent to certain death by the hundred thousand. Meanwhile in Petrograd—as St. Petersburg had come to be known—and other big cities, there was tremendous profiteering, and huge fortunes were made by speculators. These “patriotic” speculators and profiteers were of course loud in their demand for a war to the finish. It would no doubt have suited them to have a perpetual war! But the soldiers and workers and the peasantry (which supplied the soldiers) became exhausted and hungry and full of discontent.

The Tsar Nicholas was a very foolish person, a great deal under the influence of his wife, the Tsarina, an equally foolish but stronger person. The two surrounded themselves with knaves and fools, and nobody dared to criticize them. Matters came to such a pass that a disgusting scoundrel, known as Gregory Rasputin, became the chief favourite of the Tsarina, and through her, of the Tsar. Rasputin (the word *Rasputin* means “dirty dog”) had been a poor peasant who had got into trouble over stealing horses. He decided to put on a garb of holiness and adopt the paying profession of an ascetic. As in India, this was an easy way of making money in Russia. He grew his hair long, and with his hair his fame also grew till it reached the imperial Court. The only son of the Tsar and Tsarina, called the Tsarevitch, was a bit of an invalid, and Rasputin somehow made the Tsarina believe that he would cure the boy. His fortune was made, and soon he dominated the Tsar and Tsarina, and the highest appoint-

ments were made at his instance. He lived a most depraved life, and took huge bribes, but for years he played this dominating part.

Everybody was disgusted by this. Even the moderates and the aristocracy began to murmur, and there was talk of a palace revolution—that is, a forcible change of Tsars. Meanwhile Tsar Nicholas had made himself the commander-in-chief of his army and was making a mess of everything. A few days before the end of the year 1916 Rasputin was murdered by a member of the Tsar's family. He was invited to dinner and asked to shoot himself; on his refusal to do so, he was shot down. Rasputin's murder was welcomed generally as a good riddance, but it resulted in greater oppression by the Tsar's secret police.

The crisis grew. There was a food famine and riots for food in Petrograd. And then, in the early days of March, out of the long agony of the workers, unexpectedly and spontaneously, grew the revolution. Five days in March, from the 8th to the 12th, saw the triumph of this revolution. It was no palace affair; it was not even an organized revolution carefully planned by its leaders at the top. It seemed to rise from below, from the most oppressed of the workers, and went groping blindly forward with no apparent plan or leadership. The various revolutionary parties, including the local Bolsheviks, were taken unawares and did not know what lead to give. The masses themselves took the initiative, and the moment they had won the soldiers stationed at Petrograd over to their side, success had come to them. These revolutionary masses must not, however, be mistaken for unorganized mobs bent on destruction, as the peasant outbreaks had often been in the past. The important fact about this March revolution was that the lead was taken in it, for the first time in history, by the class of factory-workers, the "proletariat," as it has been called. And these workers, although they had no outstanding leaders with them at the time (Lenin and others

being in prison or exile), had many an unknown worker who had been trained by Lenin's group. These unknown workers in dozens of factories gave backbone to the whole movement and directed it into definite channels.

The revolution had triumphed in Petrograd. Moscow followed soon after. The villages watched developments. Slowly the peasantry accepted the new order, but without enthusiasm. For them, there were only two questions that mattered: to possess land and to have peace.

What of the Tsar? What was happening to him during these eventful days? He was not in Petrograd; he was far away in a small town from where, as Commander-in-Chief, he was supposed to be directing his armies. But his day was over, and, like an over-ripe fruit, he fell off almost unnoticed. The mighty Tsar, the great autocrat of all the Russias before whom millions trembled, the "Little Father" of "Holy Russia," disappeared into the "dustbin of history." It is strange how great systems collapse when they have fulfilled their destiny and lived their day. When the Tsar heard of the workers' strikes and disturbances in Petrograd, he ordered a declaration of martial law. This was formally declared by the general in command, but the declaration was not broadcast in the city or pasted up, as there was no one to do this job! The government machinery had gone to pieces. The Tsar, still blind to what was happening, tried to return to Petrograd. The railway workers stopped his train on the way. The Tsarina, who was then in a suburb of Petrograd, sent a telegram to the Tsar. It was returned from the telegraph office with a note in pencil: "Whereabouts of addressee unknown!"

The generals at the front and the liberal leaders in Petrograd, frightened by these developments, and hoping to save something from the wreck, begged the Tsar to abdicate. He did so, nominating a relative to take his place. But there were to be no more Tsars; the house of Romanoff, after three

hundred years of autocratic rule, had left the Russian stage for good.\*

The aristocracy, the landowning classes, the upper middle classes, and even the liberals and reformers, looked upon the eruption of the working class with terror and dismay. They felt powerless before them when they saw that the army on which they relied had joined the workers. They were not yet sure on which side victory would lie, for it was possible that the Tsar might turn up with an army from the front and, with its help, crush the insurrection. So, fear of the workers on the one side and of the Tsar on the other, and an excessive anxiety to save their own skins, made their lot a miserable one. There was the Duma, which represented the landowning classes and the upper *bourgeoisie*. Even the workers looked up to it to some extent, but instead of taking the lead in the crisis or doing anything, its president and members sat in fear and trembling and could not make up their minds what to do.

Meanwhile the Soviet took shape. To the workers' representatives were added soldiers' representatives, and the new Soviet took possession of one wing of the huge Tauride Palace, part of which was occupied by the Duma. The workers and soldiers were full of enthusiasm at their victory. But then the question arose: what were they to do with it?

Just then, on April 17, Lenin arrived on the scene. He had been in Switzerland right through the war, and he was eager to come to Russia as soon as he heard of the revolution. How was he to do so? The English and French would not allow him to pass their territories, nor would the Germans and Austrians. At length, for reasons of their own, the German Government agreed to let him pass in a sealed train from the Swiss to the Russian frontier. They hoped, of course, and with reason, that the arrival of Lenin in Russia would weaken

\* The dynasty began with Michael Romanoff, who was crowned Tsar in 1613.

the Provisional Government and the war party, for Lenin was against the war, and they hoped to profit by this. They did not imagine that this more or less obscure revolutionary would end by shaking Europe and the world.

There was no doubt or vagueness in Lenin's mind. His were the penetrating eyes which detected the moods of the masses; the clear head which could apply and adapt well-thought-out principles to changing situations; the inflexible will which held on to the course he had mapped out, regardless of immediate consequences. The very day he arrived he shook up violently the Bolshevik party, criticized their inaction, and pointed out in burning phrases what their duty was. His speech was an electric charge which pained but at the same time vivified. "We are not charlatans," he said; "we must base ourselves only on the consciousness of the masses. Even if it is necessary to remain in a minority—so be it. It is a good thing to give up for a time the position of leadership; we must not be afraid to remain in the minority." And so he stuck to his principles and refused to compromise. The revolution, which had drifted for so long leaderless and without guides, had at last got its leader. The hour had produced the man.

What were these differences in theory which separated the Bolsheviks from the Mensheviks and other revolutionary groups at this stage? And what had paralysed the local Bolsheviks before Lenin's arrival? And again, why had the Soviet, after having the power in its hands, made it over to the old-fashioned and conservative Duma? I cannot go into these questions deeply, but we must give them some thought if we are to understand the continually changing drama of Petrograd and Russia in 1917.

Karl Marx's theory of human change and progress was based on new social forms taking the place of old forms as these latter became out of date. As the methods of technical production improved, the economic and political organization

of society gradually caught up to them. The way this took place was by continual class struggles between the dominant class and the exploited classes. Thus the old feudal class had given place in western Europe to the *bourgeoisie*, which now controlled the economic and political structure in England, France, Germany, etc., and which, in its turn, would give place to the working class. In Russia the feudal class was still in command, and the change which had put the *bourgeoisie* in power in western Europe had not yet taken place. Most Marxists, therefore, thought that, inevitably, Russia would have to pass through this *bourgeois* and parliamentary stage before it could proceed to the last stage of the workers' republic. The middle stage could not be jumped over, according to them. Lenin himself, prior to the revolution of March 1917, had laid down an intermediate policy of co-operating with the peasants (and not opposing the *bourgeoisie*) against the Tsar and the landowners, for a *bourgeois* revolution.

The Bolsheviks and Mensheviks and all believers in Marx's theories were therefore full of this idea of having a *bourgeois* democratic republic after the English or French pattern. The leading workers' representatives also thought this inevitable, and it was because of this that the Soviet, instead of keeping power in its own hands, went and offered it to the Duma. These people, as is so often the case with all of us, had become the slaves of their own doctrines, and could not see that a new situation had arisen, which demanded a different policy or at any rate a different adaptation of the old policy. The masses were far more revolutionary than the leaders. The Mensheviks, who controlled the Soviet, even went so far as to say that the working class should not raise any social question then; their immediate task was to achieve political freedom. The Bolsheviks temporized. The March revolution succeeded in spite of its hesitating and cautious leaders.

With Lenin's arrival all this was changed. He sensed the



position immediately and, with the genius of true leadership, adapted the Marxian programme accordingly. The fight was to be against capitalism itself now for the rule of the working class in co-operation with the poorer peasantry. The three immediate slogans of the Bolsheviks became (1) democratic republic, (2) confiscation of the landed estates, and (3) an eight-hour day for the workers. Immediately, these slogans brought reality into the struggle for the peasantry and workers. It was not a vague and empty ideal for them; it meant life and hope.

Lenin's policy was for the Bolsheviks to win over the majority of the workers to their side and thus to capture the Soviet; and for the Soviet then to seize power from the Provisional Government. He was not for another revolution immediately. He insisted on winning over a majority of the workers and the Soviet before the time came to overthrow the Provisional Government. He was hard on those who wished to co-operate with this government; that was betraying the revolution. He was equally hard on those who wanted to rush ahead to upset this government before the time for it had come; "a moment of action," he said, "is no time to aim 'a wee bit too far to the left.' We look upon that as the greatest crime, disorganization."

So, calmly but inexorably, like some agent of an inevitable fate, this lump of ice covering a blazing fire within went ahead to its appointed goal.

The month of July 1918 saw startling developments in the situation in Russia. The net round the Bolsheviks was gradually closing in upon them. The Germans threatened from the Ukraine in the south, and a large number of old Czechoslovakian prisoners of war in Russia were encouraged by the Allies to march on Moscow. All over the western front in France the Great War was still going on, but in Soviet Russia the strange spectacle was seen of both the Allies and the Ger-

man Powers working independently in a common enterprise—the crushing of the Bolsheviks. Again we see how much greater is the force of class hatred than that of national hatred, and national hatred is poisonous and bitter enough. War was not officially declared against Russia by these Powers; they found many other ways of harassing the Soviet, notably by encouraging the counter-revolutionary leaders and helping them with arms and money. Several old Tsarist generals now took the field against the Soviet.

The Tsar and his family were being kept as prisoners in East Russia near the Ural mountains in the charge of the local soviet there. The advance of the Czech troops in this region frightened this local soviet, and they were alarmed at the possibility of the ex-Tsar being rescued and becoming a great centre of counter-revolution. So they took the law into their own hands and executed the whole family. It appears that the Central committee of the Soviet was not responsible for this, and Lenin was opposed to the execution of the ex-Tsar on grounds of international policy and of his family on humanitarian grounds. The deed having been done, however, the Central Government justified it. Probably this upset the Allied Governments all the more and made them still more aggressive.

August saw a worsening of the situation, and two events brought anger, despair, and terror in their train. One of these was an attempt on Lenin's life, and the other was the landing of an Allied force at Archangel in North Russia. There was wild excitement in Moscow, and the end of the Soviet's existence seemed to be very near. Moscow itself was practically surrounded by enemies—Germans, Czechs, and the counter-revolutionary forces. Only a few districts round Moscow were under Soviet rule, and the landing of an Allied army seemed to make the end certain. The Bolsheviks did not have much of an army; it was barely five months since the Brest-

Litovsk peace,\* and most of the old army had melted away to the fields. Moscow itself was full of conspiracies, and the *bourgeoisie* was openly rejoicing at the approaching fall of the Soviets.

Such was the terrible plight of the nine-month-old Soviet Republic. Despair seized the Bolsheviks and fear, and as they were going to die anyhow, they decided to die fighting. As the young French Republic had done a century and a quarter earlier, like a wild animal at bay, they turned on their enemies. There was to be no more tolerance, no mercy. The whole country was put under martial law, and early in September the Central Soviet Committee announced the Red Terror. "Death to all traitors, merciless war on the foreign invaders." They would fight with their backs to the wall both the enemy within and the enemy without. It was the Soviet against the world and against its own reactionaries. A period of what is called "militant communism" also began, and the whole country was turned into a kind of besieged camp. Every effort was made to build up the Red Army, and Trotsky was put in charge of this.

In spite of all these stupendous difficulties and numerous and powerful enemies, Soviet Russia survived and triumphed. This was one of the most astonishing feats in history. How did they manage it? There is no doubt that if the Allied Powers had been united and bent on crushing the Bolsheviks, they could have done so in the early days. Having disposed of Germany, they had vast armies to play with. But it was not so easy to use these armies anywhere, and especially against the Soviets. They were all war-weary, and another demand on them for foreign warfare would have met with refusal. There was also a great deal of sympathy among the workers for the new Russia, and the Allied governments

\* On March 3, 1918, the Russians under Lenin signed a peace with Germany at Brest-Litovsk, abandoning large territories, including Poland, Lithuania, the Ukraine, and the Baltic States.

were afraid of having to face trouble at home if they declared open war against the Soviets. As it was, Europe seemed to be on the verge of revolt. And thirdly, there was the mutual rivalry of the Allied Powers. With the coming of peace they started bickering and quarrelling among themselves. All this prevented a determined attempt on their part to put an end to the Bolsheviks. They tried to bring this about indirectly as far as possible by getting others to fight for them and supplying them with money, arms, and expert advice. They felt sure that the Soviets could not last.

All this, no doubt, helped the Soviets and gave them time to strengthen themselves. But it would be unfair to them to imagine that their victory was due to outside circumstances. Essentially, it was a victory of the self-confidence, the faith, the self-sacrifice, and the unflinching determination of the Russian people. And the wonder of it is that these people were everywhere supposed, and rightly supposed, to be lazy and ignorant, demoralized and incapable of any great effort. Freedom is a habit, and if we are deprived of it for long, we are apt to forget it. These ignorant Russian peasants and workers had had little enough occasion to practise this habit. Yet the quality of the leadership of Russia was such in those days that it converted this poor human material into a strong, organized nation, full of faith in its mission and confidence in itself. The Kolchaks and others of that kind were defeated not only because of the ability and determination of the Bolshevik leaders, but also because the Russian peasant refused to put up with them. For him they were the representatives of the old order come to take away his newly won land and other privileges, and he decided to defend these to the death.

Towering above all others, and exercising an unchallenged supremacy, was Lenin. To the Russian people he became like a demi-god, the symbol of hope and faith, the wise one who knew a way out of every difficulty and whom nothing ruf-

fled or perturbed. Next to him in those days (for he is discredited in Russia now) came Trotsky, a writer and an orator, without any previous military experience, who now set about building up a great army in the midst of civil war and blockade. Trotsky was recklessly brave, and frequently risked his life in fighting. There was no pity in him if others showed lack of courage or want of discipline. At a critical moment in the civil war he issued this order:

I give warning that if any unit retreats without orders, the first to be shot down will be the commissary of the unit, and next the commander. Brave and gallant soldiers will be appointed in their places. Cowards, dastards and traitors will not escape the bullet. This I solemnly promise in the presence of the entire Red Army.

And he kept his word.

It is not many years since he died [on January 21, 1924], and already Lenin has become a mighty tradition, not only in his native Russia, but in the world at large. As time passes he grows greater; he has become one of the chosen company of the world's immortals. Petrograd has become Leningrad, and almost every house in Russia has a Lenin corner or a Lenin picture. But he lives, not in monuments or pictures, but in the mighty work he did, and in the hearts of hundreds of millions of workers to-day who find inspiration in his example, and the hope of a better day.

Do not imagine that Lenin was an inhuman kind of machine, wrapped up in his work and thinking of nothing else. Absolutely devoted to his work and life mission he certainly was, and at the same time wholly without self-consciousness; he was the very embodiment of an idea. And yet he was very human, with that most human of all traits, the capacity to laugh heartily. The British Agent in Moscow, [Bruce] Lockhart, who was there during the early, perilous days of the

Soviet, says that, whatever happened, Lenin was always in good humour. "Of all the public figures I have ever met he possessed the most equable temperament," says this British diplomat. Simple and straight in his talk and his work, and a hater of big words and poses. He loved music, so much so that he was almost afraid that it might affect him too much and make him soft in his work.

A colleague of Lenin's, Lunacharsky,\* who was for many years the Bolshevik Commissar for Education, made a curious reference to him once. He compared Lenin's persecution of the capitalists with Christ's expulsion of the money-lenders from the temple, and added: "If Christ were alive to-day, he would be a Bolshevik." A curious comparison for irreligious people.

About women, Lenin once said: "No nation can be free when half the population is enslaved in the kitchen." Very revealing was the remark he made one day, as he was petting some children. His old friend Maxim Gorky tells us that he said, "These will have happier lives than we had. They will not experience much that we lived through. There will not be so much cruelty in their lives." Let us all hope so.

## 43. THE TREATY OF VERSAILLES

On the spot where the Armistice was signed, in the forest of Compiègne in northern France, there is a monument now which bears this legend:

*Ici le 11 Novembre, 1918, succomba le criminel orgueil de l'Empire Allemand vaincu par les peuples libres qu'il prétendait asservir—Here, on November 11, 1918, succumbed the criminal*

\* Anatoli Vasilyevich Lunacharsky (1875-1933).

pride of the German Empire, vanquished by the free peoples whom it had sought to enslave.

The German Empire had gone indeed, outwardly at any rate, and Prussian military arrogance had been humbled. Even before this, the Russian Empire had ceased to be and the House of Romanoff had been marched off the stage where it had misbehaved so long. The war proved the grave of yet a third empire and ancient dynasty, the Austro-Hungarian Empire of the Hapsburgs. But other empires still remained—they were among the victors—and victory did not lessen their pride or make them more regardful of the rights of other peoples whom they had enslaved.

The victorious Allies held their Peace Conference in Paris in 1919. In Paris the world's future was to be fashioned by them, and for many months this famous city became the centre of the world's attention. To it there journeyed all manner of folk from far and near. There were statesmen and politicians, feeling vastly important, and diplomats, and experts, and military men, and financiers, and profiteers, all of them with hosts of assistants and typists and clerks. There was of course an army of journalists. There came representatives from peoples struggling for freedom, like the Irish and the Egyptians and Arabs and others whose names even had not previously been heard; and peoples from eastern Europe wanting to carve out separate States for themselves out of the ruins of the Austrian and Turkish Empires. And of course there were hosts of adventurers. The world was going to be divided anew, and the vultures were not going to miss this opportunity.

Much was expected of the Peace Conference. People hoped that after the terrible experience of the war, a just and enduring peace would be devised. The tremendous strain was telling on the masses still, and there was great discontent among the labouring classes. The prices of the necessities of

life had risen greatly, and this added to the people's suffering. There were many signs in Europe in 1919 of impending social revolution. The example of Russia seemed to be a catching one.

America, Britain, and France were represented by President Wilson, Lloyd George, and Clemenceau, and to these three men fell the great task of moulding the world afresh and healing its terrible wounds. It was a task worthy of supermen, demigods; and these three men were very far from being either. Men in authority—kings, statesmen, generals, and the like—are advertised and boomed up so much by the Press and otherwise that they often appear as giants of thought and action to the common people. A kind of halo seems to surround them, and in our ignorance we attribute to them many qualities which they are far from possessing. But on closer acquaintance they turn out to be very ordinary persons. A famous Austrian statesman once said that the world would be astounded if it knew with what little intelligence it is ruled. So these three, the "Big Three," big as they seemed, were singularly limited in outlook and ignorant of international affairs, ignorant even of geography!

President Woodrow Wilson came with a vast reputation and popularity. He had used so many beautiful and idealistic phrases in his speeches and notes that people had begun to look upon him almost as a prophet of the new freedom\* that was to come. Lloyd George, the Prime Minister of Great Britain, was also a weaver of fine phrases, but he had a reputation for opportunism. Clemenceau, the "Tiger" as he was called, had no use for ideals and pious phrases. He was out to crush France's old enemy Germany, crush her and humble her in every way so that she might not be able to raise her head again.

So these three struggled with each other and pulled each

\* *The New Freedom* was actually the title of a book that Wilson published in 1913.



his own way, and each in his turn was pulled and pushed by numerous other people in the Conference and outside. And behind them all lay the shadow of Soviet Russia. Russia was not represented at the Conference, neither was Germany; but Soviet Russia's very existence was a continuing challenge to all the capitalist Powers assembled in Paris.

Clemenceau won in the end, with the help of Lloyd George. Wilson got one of the things he was very keen on—a League of Nations—and having got the others to agree to this, he gave in on most other points. After many months of argument and debate, the Allies at the Peace Conference at last agreed to a draft treaty, and, having agreed amongst themselves, they summoned the German representatives to hear their commands. The enormous draft treaty of 440 articles was hurled at these Germans, and they were called upon to sign it. There was no argument with them, no opportunity was given them to make suggestions or changes. It was going to be a dictated peace; and they must either sign it as it was or take the consequences. The representatives of the new German Republic protested, and, on the very last day of grace, signed this Treaty of Versailles. [June 28, 1919]

This treaty laid down that Germany was the guilty party in causing the war, and the Germans were thus forced to admit their own war guilt by signing the treaty. Such forcible admissions have little value; they create bitterness, as they did in this case.

Germany was also called upon to disarm. She was allowed to keep only a small army, more or less for police purposes, and had to surrender her fleet to the Allies. As the German fleet was being taken for this surrender, its officers and men decided, on their own responsibility, to sink it rather than hand it over to the British. And so, in June 1919, at Scapa Flow, within sight of the British, who were making ready to take over, the whole German fleet was scuttled and sunk by its own crews.

Further, Germany was to pay a war indemnity and to make good the losses and damage caused to the Allies by the war. This was called "Reparations," and for many years the word hung like a shadow over Europe. No definite sum was fixed by the treaty, but provision was made for the fixing of this sum. This undertaking to make good the war losses of the Allies was a stupendous affair. Germany was a conquered and ruined country at the time, faced with vast problems to make both ends meet for her domestic purposes. In addition to this, to have to shoulder the burden of the Allies was an impossible task, incapable of fulfilment. But the Allies were full of hatred and the spirit of revenge, and wanted not only their "pound of flesh," but almost the last drop of blood from Germany's prostrate body. In England Lloyd George had won an election on the cry of "Hang the Kaiser." In France feelings were even bitterer.

The whole purpose of all these clauses of the treaty was to tie up Germany in every possible way, to disable her, and to prevent her from becoming strong again. She was to remain for generations the economic serf of the Allies, paying vast sums as annual tribute. The obvious lesson of history that it is impossible to tie up a great people for long in this way did not strike the wise super-statesmen who laid the foundations of this peace of vengeance at Versailles. They are repenting it now.

Lastly, I must tell you of President Wilson's child, the League of Nations, which the Treaty of Versailles presented to the world. This was to be a league of free and self-governing States, and its purpose was "to prevent future wars by establishing relations on the basis of justice and honour and to promote co-operation, material and intellectual, between the nations of the world." A very praiseworthy purpose! Each member-State of the League undertook never to go to war with a fellow-State until all possibilities of a peaceful settlement had been exhausted, and then only after an inter-

val of nine months. In case a member-State broke this pledge, the other States were pledged to discontinue financial and economic relations with that State. All this sounds very fine on paper; in practice it has turned out to be very different. It is worth noting, however, that even in theory the League did not try to end war; it sought to put difficulties in its way, so that the passage of time and efforts at conciliation might soothe away war passions. Nor did it try to remove the causes of war.\*

Many people looked up to the League with enthusiasm and in the hope that it would end, or at any rate greatly lessen, discords. League of Nations societies were founded in many countries to popularize the League and to spread, it was said, the habit of looking at things internationally. On the other hand, many other people described the League as a pious fraud, meant to further the designs of the great Powers. The League started functioning on New Year's Day 1920. Its life was a brief one, and yet long enough to discredit it entirely. It failed completely in achieving its real object, the preservation of peace or even lessening the chances of war.

Whatever may have been the original intention of President Wilson about it, there can be no doubt that the League was a tool in the hands of the great Powers, and especially of England and France. Its very basic function was the maintenance of the *status quo*—that is, the existing order. [This meant a] perpetual dominance by the Powers over their empires.

Fine words and phrases were used. The imperialist Powers were "trustees" for the inhabitants of the mandated territories, and the League was to see that the conditions of the trust were fulfilled. As a matter of fact this made matters

\* Editor's note: In the pages that follow, numerous changes from the present tense to the past have been made, necessitated by the fact that Nehru wrote the original passages in the midst of the events and trends he described; for the reader's convenience, such changes, when merely of tense, have not been bracketed.

worse. The Powers did just what they liked, but they put on a more sanctimonious garb, and thus lulled the consciences of the unwary. When some little State offended in any way, the League put on a stern aspect and threatened it with its displeasure. When a great Power offended, the League looked away as far as possible or tried to minimize the offence.

Thus the great Powers dominated the League, and they used it whenever it served their purpose to do so, and ignored it when this was found more convenient. Perhaps the fault was not the League's; it lay with the system itself, which the League, by its very nature, had to put up with. The very essence of imperialism was bitter rivalry and competition between the different Powers, each of them bent on exploiting as much of the world as possible. If the members of a society are continually trying to pick each other's pockets and sharpening their knives in order to cut each other's throats, it is not likely that there will be much co-operation between them, or that the society will make remarkable progress. It is not surprising therefore that, in spite of an imposing array of sponsors and god-parents, the League languished.

In the course of the treaty discussions at Versailles, it was posed on behalf of the Japanese Government that a clause recognizing racial equality be introduced into the treaty. This was not accepted. Japan was, however, consoled by the gift of Kiauchau in China. The "Big Three" were generous at the expense of a weak and humble ally like China. Because of this China did not sign the treaty.

Such was the Treaty of Versailles, which put an end to "the war which was to end war." Philip Snowden, who later became Viscount Snowden, and a Cabinet Minister in England, made the following comment on the Treaty:

The Treaty should satisfy brigands, imperialists, and militarists. It is the death-blow to the hopes of those who expected the end of the war to bring peace. It is not a peace

treaty, but a declaration of another war. It is the betrayal of democracy and of the fallen in the war. The Treaty exposes the true aims of the Allies.

Indeed, the Allies, in their hatred and pride and greed, overreached themselves. They began to repent in after years when the consequences of their own folly threatened to overwhelm them. But it was too late then.

#### 44. CRISES AFTER WORLD WAR I

I am not going into the question here of what our outlook on history should be. My own on the subject has changed greatly in recent years. For the war gave a terrible shaking to everything and everybody. It shook the whole system of ideas on which we had grown up and made us begin to doubt the very basis of modern society and civilization. We saw the terrible waste of young lives, the lying, violence, brutality, destruction, and wondered if this was the end of civilization. The Soviet rose in Russia—a new thing, a new social order, and a challenge to the old. Other ideas also floated in the air. It was a period of disintegration, of the breaking up of old beliefs and customs; an age of doubt and questioning which always come in a period of transition and rapid change.

Inevitably one thinks of the Peace of Vienna of 1815 and its consequences, and compares it with the Peace of Versailles of 1919 and its consequences. The Peace of Vienna was not a happy one; it laid the seeds of future wars in Europe. Not learning by experience, our statesmen made the Versailles peace a far worse one.

What are the outstanding events [of the post-war period]? First in importance, I think, and most striking of all, has been the rise and consolidation of the Soviet Union, the U.S.S.R. or the Union of Socialist and Soviet Republics, as it is called. I have told you already something of the enormous difficulties which Soviet Russia had to face in its fight for existence. That it won in spite of them is one of the wonders of this century. The Soviet system spread all over the Asiatic parts of the former Tsarist Empire, in Siberia right up to the Pacific, and in Central Asia to within hail of the Indian frontier. Separate Soviet republics were formed, but they federated together into one Union, and this is now the U.S.S.R. This Union covers an enormous area in Europe and Asia, which is about one-sixth of the total land area of the world. The area is very big, but bigness by itself does not mean much, and Russia, and much more so Siberia and Central Asia, were very backward. The second wonder that the Soviets performed was to transform great parts of this area out of all recognition by prodigious schemes of planning. There is no instance in recorded history of such rapid advance of a people. Even the most backward areas in Central Asia have gone ahead with a rush which we in India might well envy. The most notable advances have been in education and in industry. By vast Five Years' Plans the industrialization of Russia has been pushed on at a feverish pace and enormous factories have been put up. All this has meant a very great strain on the people, who have had to do without comforts, and even necessities, so that the greater part of their earnings might go in this building up of the first socialist country. The burden has fallen especially on the peasantry.

The United States of America for ten years prospered exceedingly. They had in war-time pushed out England from being the boss of the money-lending business. America was now the money-lender to the world, and all the world was her debtor. In an economic sense she dominated the whole

world, and she might have lived comfortably on the world's tribute, as, to some extent, England had done previously. But there were two difficulties. The debtor countries were in a bad way and could not pay their debts in cash; indeed, even if they had been in a good way they could not have paid these vast sums in cash. The only way they could try to pay them was to manufacture goods and send them to America. But America did not like the idea of foreign goods coming to her, and huge tariff walls were put up which stopped most of these goods from entering. How, then, were the poor debtor countries to pay? A brilliant way was found. America would lend them more money to pay the interest due to her! This was an extraordinary way of getting a debt paid, for it meant the creditor paying more and more and the debt going up. It became clear enough that most of the debtor countries would never be able to shake off the debt, and then suddenly America stopped lending, and immediately the whole paper structure came down with a crash. And another very strange thing happened. America, prosperous America, filled to the brim with gold, became suddenly a land of vast numbers of unemployed workers, and the wheels of industry stopped running, and destitution spread.

If rich America was so hard hit, it can be imagined what the state of Europe was. Each country tried to keep out foreign goods by heavy tariff rates and other devices and buy-home-made-goods propaganda. Each country wanted to sell and not to buy, or to buy as little as possible. This kind of thing cannot go on for long without killing international trade, for trade and commerce depend on exchange. This policy is called economic nationalism. It spread to all countries, and so did other forms of aggressive nationalism. As trade and industry languished, the difficulties of each country grew, and the great imperialist Powers tried to make both ends meet by greater imperialist exploitation abroad and by cutting down the wages of workers at home. Rival imperial-

isms, in their desire and attempts to exploit various parts of the world, came more and more into conflict. While the League of Nations talked piously of disarmament and did nothing, the spectre of war seemed ever to draw nearer. Again the Powers started grouping themselves for the conflict that seemed inevitable.

For the first ten years after the war it appeared that perhaps capitalism might recover and steady itself for another considerable period. But the next three years or so made this very doubtful. Not only was the rivalry between capitalist States growing to dangerous dimensions, but, at the same time, within each State the conflict between classes, between the workers and the capitalist owning class, which controls the government, became acute. As these conditions worsened, a last desperate attempt was made by the owning classes to crush the rising workers. This took the form of fascism. Fascism appeared where the conflict between the classes had become acute and the owning class was in danger of losing its privileged position.

Fascism began in Italy soon after the war. The workers were getting out of hand there when the fascists, under the leadership of Mussolini, gained control, and they have been in power ever since. Fascism means naked dictatorship. It despises openly democratic forms. Fascist methods have spread to a greater or lesser extent in many countries of Europe, and dictatorship is quite a common phenomenon there. Early in 1933 fascism triumphed in Germany, where the young Republic, proclaimed in 1918, was ended and the most barbarous methods were adopted to kill the workers' movement.

So three of the outstanding events of the fourteen years after the war [were]: the rise of the Soviet Union; the economic world domination of America and her present crisis; and the European tangle. The fourth outstanding event of



this period was the full awakening of eastern countries and their aggressive attempts to gain freedom. The East definitely entered world politics.

## 45. INDIA AND GANDHI

India waited after [World War I]; resentful, rather aggressive, not very hopeful, but still expectant. Within a few months, the first fruits of the new British policy, so eagerly waited for, appeared in the shape of a proposal to pass special laws to control the revolutionary movement. Instead of more freedom, there was to be more repression. These Bills were based on the report of a committee and were known as the Rowlatt Bills. But very soon they were called the "Black Bills" all over the country, and were denounced everywhere and by every Indian, including even the most moderate. They gave great powers to the government and the police to arrest, keep in prison without trial, or to have a secret trial of, any person they disapproved of or suspected. A famous description of these Bills at the time was: *na vakīl, na appeal, na dāṭīl*. As the outcry against the Bills gained volume, a new factor appeared, a little cloud on the political horizon which grew and spread rapidly till it covered the Indian sky.

This new factor was Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi.\* He had returned to India from South Africa during war-time and settled down with his colony in an *ashram* in Sabarmati. He had kept away from politics. He had even helped the government in recruiting men for the war. He was, of course, very well known in India since his *satyagraha* struggle in South Africa. In 1917 he had championed with success

\* Gandhi was born in 1869 and was assassinated in 1948.

the miserable down-trodden tenants of the European planters in the Champaran District of Bihar. Later he had stood up for the peasantry of Kaira in Gujrat. Early in 1919 he was very ill. He had barely recovered from it when the Rowlatt Bill agitation filled the country. He also joined his voice to the universal outcry.

But this voice was somehow different from the others. It was quiet and low, and yet it could be heard above the shouting of the multitude; it was soft and gentle, and yet there seemed to be steel hidden away somewhere in it; it was courteous and full of appeal, and yet there was something grim and frightening in it; every word used was full of meaning and seemed to carry a deadly earnestness. Behind the language of peace and friendship there was power and the quivering shadow of action and a determination not to submit to a wrong. We are familiar with that voice now; but it was new to us in February and March 1919. We did not quite know what to make of it, but we were thrilled. This was something very different from our noisy politics of condemnation and nothing else, long speeches always ending in the same futile and ineffective resolutions of protest which nobody took very seriously. This was the politics of action, not of talk.

Mahatma Gandhi organized a *Satyagraha Sabha* of those who were prepared to break chosen laws and thus court imprisonment. This was quite a novel idea then, and many of us were excited but many shrank back.

As usual with him, Gandhi sent a courteous appeal and warning to the Viceroy. When he saw that the British Government were determined to pass the law in spite of the opposition of a united India, he called for an all-India day of mourning, a *hartal*, a stoppage of business, and meetings on the first Sunday after the Bills became law. This was to inaugurate the *Satyagraha* movement, and so Sunday, April 6, 1919, was observed as the Satyagraha Day all over the coun-

try, in town and village. It was the first all-India demonstration of the kind, and it was a wonderfully impressive one, in which all kinds of people and communities joined. Those of us who had worked for this *hartal* were amazed at its success. It had been possible for us to approach only a limited number of people in the cities. But a new spirit was in the air, and somehow the message managed to reach the remotest villages of our huge country. For the first time the villager as well as the town worker took part in a political demonstration on a mass scale.

How was freedom to be obtained? Obviously, we were not going to get it by remaining quiet and waiting for it. It was equally clear that methods of mere protest and begging, which the Congress had so far followed with more or less vehemence, were not only undignified for a people, but were also futile and ineffective. Never in history had such methods succeeded or induced a ruling or privileged class to part with power. History, indeed, showed us that peoples and classes who were enslaved had won their freedom through violent rebellion and insurrection.

Armed rebellion seemed out of the question for the Indian people. We were disarmed, and most of us did not even know the use of arms. Besides, in a contest of violence, the organized power of the British Government, or any State, was far greater than anything that could be raised against it. Armies might mutiny, but unarmed people could not rebel and face armed forces. Individual terrorism, on the other hand, the killing by bomb or pistol of individual officers, was a bankrupt's creed. It was demoralizing for the people, and it was ridiculous to think that it could shake a powerfully organized government, however much it might frighten individuals. This kind of individual violence was even given up by the Russian revolutionaries.

What, then, remained? Russia had succeeded in her revolution and established a workers' republic, and her methods

had been mass action backed by army support. But even in Russia the Soviets had succeeded at a time when the country and the old government had simply gone to pieces, as a result of the war, and there was little left to oppose them. Besides, few people in India knew at that time about Russia or Marxism, or even thought in terms of the workers or peasants.

So all these avenues led nowhere, and there seemed to be no way out of the intolerable conditions of a degrading servitude. People who were at all sensitive felt terribly depressed and helpless. This was the moment when Gandhi put forward his programme of non-co-operation. Like Sinn Fein in Ireland, it taught us to rely on ourselves and build up our own strength, and it was obviously a very effective method of bringing pressure on the government. The government rested very largely on the co-operation, willing or unwilling, of Indians themselves, and if this co-operation were withdrawn and the boycotts practised, it was quite possible, in theory, to bring down the whole structure of government. Even if the non-co-operation did not go so far, there was no doubt that it could exert tremendous pressure on the government, and at the same time increase the strength of the people. It was to be perfectly peaceful, and yet it was not mere non-resistance. *Satyagraha* was a definite, though non-violent, form of resistance to what was considered wrong. It was, in effect, a peaceful rebellion, a most civilized form of warfare, and yet dangerous to the stability of the State. It was an effective way of getting the masses to function, and it seemed to fit in with the peculiar genius of the Indian people. It put us on our best behaviour and seemed to put the adversary in the wrong. It made us shed the fear that crushed us, and we began to look people in the face as we had never done before, and to speak out our minds fully and frankly. A great weight seemed to be lifted from our minds, and this new freedom of speech and action filled us with confidence

and strength. And, finally, the method of peace prevented to a large extent the growth of those terribly bitter racial and national hatreds which had always so far accompanied such struggles, and thus made the ultimate settlement easier.

It is not surprising, therefore, that this programme of non-co-operation, coupled with the remarkable personality of Gandhi, caught the imagination of the country and filled it with hope. It spread, and at its approach the old demoralization vanished. The new Congress attracted most of the vital elements in the country and grew in power and prestige.

A mass struggle has one great advantage. It is the best and swiftest method, though perhaps a painful one, of giving political education to the masses. For the masses need the "schooling of big events." Ordinary peace-time political activity, such as elections in democratic countries, often confuses the average person. There is a deluge of oratory, and every candidate promises all manner of fine things, and the poor voter, or the man in the field or factory or shop, is confused. There are no very clear lines of cleavage for him between one group and another. But when a mass struggle comes, or in time of revolution, the real position stands out clearly, as if lit up by lightning. In such moments of crisis, groups or classes or individuals cannot hide their real feelings or character. Truth will out. Not only is a time of revolution a test of character, of courage, endurance, and selflessness, it also brings out the real conflicts between different classes and groups, which had so far been covered up by fine and vague phrases.

Civil Disobedience in India was a national struggle; it was certainly not a class struggle. It was definitely a middle-class movement with peasant backing. It could not therefore separate the classes as a class movement would have done. And yet even in this national movement there was to some extent a lining up of classes. Some of these, like the feudal princes, the *taluqadars* and big *zamindars*, aligned themselves com-

pletely with the government, preferring their class interest to national freedom.

The growth of the national movement, under the leadership of the Congress, resulted in the peasant masses joining the Congress and looking to it for relief from their many burdens. This increased the power of the Congress greatly and at the same time it gave it a mass outlook. While the leadership remained middle class, this was tempered by pressure from below, and agrarian and social problems occupied the Congress more and more. A gradual leaning towards socialism also developed.

## 46. WESTERN ASIA RE-ENTERS WORLD POLITICS

Only a tiny strip of blue separates Egypt and Africa from western Asia. Let us cross this Suez Canal and visit Arabia and Palestine and Syria and Iraq—and, a little beyond them, Persia. Western Asia, as we have seen, has played a mighty part in history, and has often been the pivot of world affairs. And then there came a period, lasting several hundred years, when politically it retired into the background. It became a backwater, and the current of life rushed by, hardly creating a ripple on its still surface. And now we are witnesses of yet another change which is bringing the countries of the Middle East again into world affairs; again the highway between East and West passes through them. This is a fact which deserves our attention.

Whenever I think of western Asia I am apt to lose myself in the past; so many images of the old days crowd into my mind, and I find it difficult to resist their fascination. I must

remind you of the importance, for many thousands of years from the very beginning of history, of this part of the earth's surface. Old Chaldea dimly appears in history seven thousand years ago. (This corresponds to modern Iraq.) And then comes Babylon, and after the Babylonians appear the cruel Assyrians, with their great capital at Nineveh. The Assyrians are in their turn pushed away, and a new dynasty and a new people, coming from Persia, impose their will on the whole of the Middle East from the Indian frontier to Egypt. These were the Achæmenids of Persia, with their capital at Persepolis. They produced the "Great Kings" Cyrus and Darius and Xerxes, who threatened little Greece, but failed to overcome her. They met their fate later at the hands of a son of Greece, or rather of Macedonia, Alexander. A curious incident took place in Alexander's career when, in this meeting-place of Asia and Europe, he planned what has been called a "marriage" of the two continents. He himself (although he had a few wives already) married the daughter of the Persian King, and thousands of Alexander's officers and soldiers also married Persian girls.

After Alexander, Greek culture prevailed in the Middle East from the Indian frontier to Egypt for many centuries. The power of Rome arose during this period, and it spread towards Asia. It found a check in a new Persian Empire—that of the Sassanids. The Roman Empire itself split up into two, the Western and the Eastern, and Constantinople came to be the seat of the latter. The old struggle between East and West continued on these plains of western Asia, and the chief combatants were the Byzantine Empire of Constantinople and the Persian Sassanid Empire. And all this time great caravans of people, carrying merchandise on the backs of camels, crossed these plains from east to west and west to east, for the Middle East was then one of the world's great highways.

Three great religions had seen the light of day in these

lands of western Asia—Judaism (that is the religion of the Jews), Zoroastrianism (the religion of the modern Parsees), and Christianity. A fourth now appeared in the deserts of Arabia, and soon it dominated the other three in this part of the world. Then there came the Arab Empire of Baghdad and a new form of the old struggle—Arabs against Byzantines. After a long and brilliant career, Arab civilization wanes before the coming of the Seljuk Turks, and is finally crushed by the successors of Chengiz Khan, the Mongol.

But before the Mongols came west a fierce struggle had already commenced on the western coasts of Asia between the Christian West and the Muslim East. These were the Crusades, which lasted, off and on, for two hundred and fifty years, almost to the middle of the thirteenth century. These Crusades are looked upon as wars of religion, and so they were. But religion was more of an excuse for the wars than a cause. The people of Europe in those days were backward as compared to the East. These were the Dark Ages of Europe. But Europe was waking up, and the more advanced and cultured East drew it like a magnet. This pull towards the East took many shapes, and among these the Crusades were the most important. As a result of these wars Europe learnt much from the western Asiatic countries. She learnt many fine arts and crafts and habits of luxury, and, what was more important, methods of scientific work and thought.

The Crusades were hardly over when the Mongols swept down on western Asia, bringing destruction in their train. And yet we must not think of the Mongols just as destroyers. Their vast movements from China to Russia brought together distant peoples and encouraged trade and intercourse. Under their huge empire the old caravan routes became safe to travel by, and not only merchants but diplomatists, religious missionaries and others went up and down them on their tremendous journeys. The Middle East was in the direct line



of these ancient world highways: it was the link between Asia and Europe.

It was in the days of the Mongols that Marco Polo went from his native Venice all the way across Asia to China. We happen to possess a book written, or rather dictated, by him giving an account of his travels, and that is why we remember him. But many other people must have undertaken these long journeys without taking the trouble to write about them and, even if they did write, their books may have perished, for those were the days of manuscript books. Caravans were continually passing from country to country, and though the main business was trade, many a man accompanied them in search of fortune and adventure. One great traveller of the old days stands out like Marco Polo. This was Ibn Battuta, an Arab born early in the fourteenth century in Tangiers in Morocco.\* He thus came just a generation after Marco Polo. As a young man of twenty-one he marched out on his tremendous journey into the wide world, carrying little with him except his wits and the education of a Muslim *Qazi* or religious judge. From Morocco, right across North Africa, he travelled to Egypt, and then to Arabia and Syria and Persia; then he went to Anatolia (Turkey), and South Russia (under the Mongol Khans of the Golden Horde), and Constantinople (still the capital of Byzantium), and Central Asia, and India. He crossed India from north to south, went on to Malabar and Ceylon, and then to China. On his return he wandered about Africa and even crossed the Sahara desert! This is a record of travel which is rare enough to-day with our many conveniences. It is an amazing eye-opener for the first half of the fourteenth century, and it shows us how common travelling was in those days. In any event, Ibn Bat-

\* Ibn Battuta (1304-1377) travelled in Africa and Asia from 1325 to 1354, visiting Asia Minor, China, Malaya, Java, the Philippines, as well as Spain and North Africa.

tuta must be numbered amongst the great travellers of all time.

Ibn Battuta's book contains delightful observations about the people and countries he visited. Egypt was rich then because the whole of the Indian trade with the West passed through it, and this was a very profitable business. These profits went to make Cairo into a great city with beautiful monuments. Ibn Battuta tells us of caste in India, of *sati*, and of the custom of offering *pan-supari*! We learn from him of Indian merchants carrying on a brisk trade in foreign ports, and Indian ships on the seas. He is particular to notice and to note down where he found beautiful women, and the manner of their dress and scents and ornaments. He describes the city of Delhi as "the metropolis of India, a vast and magnificent city, uniting beauty with strength." Those were the days of the mad Sultan Mohammad Tughlaq, who, in a fit of anger, transferred his capital from Delhi to Daulatabad in the south, and thus converted this "vast and magnificent city" into a desert "empty and unpopulated, save for a few inhabitants," and even these few inhabitants had crept in long afterwards.

I have managed to get swept away a little by Ibn Battuta. These travel-stories of old days fascinate me.

So we see that up till the fourteenth century the Middle East, or western Asia, played a great part in world affairs and was the main link between East and West.

In this age of air-power, western Asia attains a new importance because of the many long-distance lines that cross there. It re-enters again world politics and becomes a pivot of inter-continental affairs. This means also that it becomes the scene of friction and conflict between the great Powers, for their ambitions clash, and each tries to overreach the other.

## 47. PALESTINE

Adjoining Syria is Palestine. This is an even smaller country, but it attracts a great deal of attention because of its old history and associations. For it is a holy land for the Jews as well as Christians and, to some extent, even the Muslims. British policy had created a special minority problem here—that of the Jews.

The Jews are a very remarkable people. Originally they were a small tribe, or several tribes, in Palestine, and their early story is told in the Old Testament of the Bible. Rather conceited they were, thinking themselves the Chosen People. But this is a conceit in which nearly all people have indulged. They were repeatedly conquered and suppressed and enslaved, and some of the most beautiful and moving poems in English are the songs and laments of these Jews as given in the authorized translation of the Bible. I suppose in the original Hebrew they are equally, or even more, beautiful. I shall give you just a few lines from one of the Psalms:—

By the waters of Babylon we sat down and wept: when we remembered thee, O Zion.

As for our harps we hanged them up: upon the trees that are therein.

For they that led us away captive required of us then a song, and melody, in our heaviness: Sing us one of the songs of Zion.

How shall we sing the Lord's song: in a strange land?

If I forget thee, O Jerusalem: let my right hand forget her cunning.

If I do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth: yea, if I prefer not Jerusalem in my mirth.

These Jews were finally dispersed all over the world. They had no home or nation, and everywhere they went they were treated as unwelcome and undesirable strangers. They were made to live in special areas of cities, apart from the others—"ghettos" these areas were called—so that they might not pollute others. Sometimes they were made to put on a special dress. They were humiliated, reviled, tortured, and massacred; the very word "Jew" became a word of abuse, a synonym for a miser and a grasping money-lender. And yet these amazing people not only survived all this, but managed to keep their racial and cultural characteristics, and prospered and produced a host of great men. To-day they hold leading positions as scientists, statesmen, literary men, financiers, business men, and even the greatest socialists have been Jews. Most of them, of course, were far from prosperous; they crowded in the cities of eastern Europe and, from time to time, suffered "pogroms" or massacres. These people without home or country, and especially the poor among them, had never ceased to dream of old Jerusalem, which appeared to their imaginations greater and more magnificent than it ever was in fact. Zion they called Jerusalem, a kind of promised land, and Zionism is this call of the past which pulls them to Jerusalem and Palestine.

Towards the end of the nineteenth century this Zionist movement took gradual shape as a colonizing movement, and many Jews went to settle in Palestine. There was also a renaissance of the Hebrew language. During the World War the British armies invaded Palestine and, as they were marching on Jerusalem, the British Government made a declaration in November 1917, called the Balfour Declaration. They declared that it was their intention to establish a "Jewish National Home" in Palestine. This declaration was made to win the good will of international Jewry, and was welcomed by Jews. But there was one little drawback, one not unimportant fact seems to have been overlooked. Palestine was not a

wilderness, or an empty, uninhabited place. It was already somebody else's home. So that this generous gesture of the British Government was really at the expense of the people who already lived in Palestine, and these people, including Arabs, non-Arabs, Muslims, Christians, and, in fact, everybody who was not a Jew, protested vigorously at the declaration. It was really an economic question. These people felt that the Jews would compete with them in all activities and, with the great wealth behind them, would become the economic masters of the country; they were afraid that the Jews would take the bread out of their mouths and the land from the peasantry.

The story of Palestine ever since has been one of conflict between Arabs and Jews.

## 48. DEMOCRACY AND DICTATORSHIPS

Benito Mussolini's example of setting himself up as a dictator in Italy seemed to be a catching one in Europe.\* "There is a vacant throne," he had said, "in every country in Europe waiting for a capable man to fill it." Dictatorships arose in many countries. Among the other countries besides Italy and Spain that gave up the democratic forms of government and established dictatorships were: Poland, Yugoslavia, Greece, Bulgaria, Portugal, Hungary, and Austria. In Poland, Pilsudski, the old socialist of Tsarist days, was the Dictator, owing to his control of the army, and he was in the habit of using the most amazingly offensive language to the legislators of the Polish Parliament, and sometimes indeed they were arrested and bundled away. In Yugoslavia, the King,

\* On November 25, 1922, the King of Italy granted Mussolini dictatorial powers.

Alexander, is himself the Dictator. It is stated that in some parts of the country conditions became worse, and there was more oppression than there ever was even when the Turks governed them.

All the countries I have mentioned above have not been continuously under open dictatorships. Sometimes their parliaments wake up for a while and are allowed to function; sometimes, as recently happened in Bulgaria, the government in power arrests any group of deputies it does not like, such as the communists, and removes them forcibly from the Parliament, leaving the others to carry on as best they can. Always they live either under dictatorship or on the verge of it, and such governments of individuals or small groups, resting on force, must find support in continuing repression, murders and imprisonments of opponents, a strict censorship, and a widespread system of spies.

Dictatorships sprang up outside Europe also. [In Turkey there was] Kemal Pasha. In South America there were many dictators, but they are an old institution there, for the South American republics have never taken kindly to the processes of democracy.

I have not included the Soviet Union in the above list of dictatorships, because the dictatorship there, although as ruthless as any other, is of a different type. It is not the dictatorship of an individual or a small group, but of a well-organized political party basing itself especially on the workers. They call it the "dictatorship of the proletariat." Thus we have three kinds of dictatorships—the communist type, the fascist, and the military. There is nothing peculiar about the military one; it has existed from the earliest days. The communist and fascist types are new in history, and are the special products of our own times.

The first thing that strikes one is that all these dictatorships and their variations are the direct opposite of democracy and the parliamentary form of government. You will remember

that the nineteenth century was the century of democracy, the century when the Rights of Man of the French Revolution governed advanced thought, and individual freedom was the aim. Out of this developed the parliamentary form of government, in varying degrees, in most countries of Europe. The twentieth century, or rather the post-War years, put an end to this great tradition of the nineteenth century. And with this fall of democracy the so-called liberal groups everywhere suffered a like fate.

Why has this happened? Why did democracy, which was for a century or more the ideal and inspiration of countless people, and which counted its martyrs by the thousand, why did it fall into disfavour? Such changes do not happen without sufficient reason; they are not just due to the whims and fancies of a fickle public.

I have referred to democracy as "formal." The communists said that it was not real democracy; it was only a democratic shell to hide the fact that one class ruled over the others. According to them, democracy covered the dictatorship of the capitalist class. It was plutocracy, government by the wealthy. The much-paraded vote given to the masses gave them only the choice of saying once, in four or five years, whether a certain person, X, might rule over them and exploit them or another person, Y, should do so. In either event the masses were to be exploited by the ruling class. Real democracy could only come when this class rule and exploitation end and only one class exists. To bring about this socialist State, however, a period of the dictatorship of the proletariat was necessary so as to keep down all capitalist elements in the population and prevent them from intriguing against the workers' State. In Russia this dictatorship was exercised by the Soviets in which all the workers and peasants and other "active" elements were represented. Thus it became a dictatorship of the 90 per cent. or even 95 per cent. over the remaining 10 or 5 per cent. That is the theory. In practice

the Communist Party controls the Soviets and the ruling clique of communists control the Party. And the dictatorship is as strict, so far as censorship and freedom of thought or action are concerned, as any other. But as it is based on the good will of the workers it must carry the workers with it. And, finally, there is no exploitation of the workers or any other class for the benefit of another. There is no exploiting class left. If there is any exploitation, it is done by the State for the benefit of all. Russia, it is worth remembering, never had the democratic form of government. It jumped in 1917 from autocracy to communism.

The fascist attitude was entirely different. [The Fascists] did not seem to possess any fixed principles. But they were opposed to democracy, and their opposition was not on the communist ground that democracy was not the real article but a sham. Fascists objected to the whole principle underlying the democratic idea. Mussolini called it a "putrefying corpse!" The idea of individual liberty was equally disliked by the fascists, the State was everything, the individual nothing. (Communists also do not attach much value to individual liberties.) What would poor Mazzini, the prophet of nineteenth century-democratic liberalism, have said to his fellow-countryman Mussolini!

Not only communists and fascists, but many others became dissatisfied with the old idea of giving a vote and calling it a democracy. Democracy means equality, and can only flourish in an equal society. It was obvious enough that the giving of votes to everybody did not result in producing an equal society. In spite of adult suffrage and the like, there was tremendous inequality. Therefore, in order to give democracy a chance, an equal society must be created, and this reasoning led [the critics of democracy to propose] various other ideals and methods.

Let us look a little more deeply into fascism. It gloried in



violence and hated pacifism. Mussolini wrote in the *Enciclopedia Italiana*:

Fascism does not believe in the necessity or utility of perpetual peace. Therefore it repudiates pacifism, which conceals a refusal to struggle and an essential cowardice—in face of sacrifice. War, and war only, raises human energies to the maximum of tension and seals with its nobility the peoples who have the courage to accept it. All other trials are substitutes; they do not place the individual before the choice of life and death.

Fascism was intensely nationalistic, while communism was international. Fascism opposed internationalism. It made of the State a god on whose altar individual freedom and rights must be sacrificed; all other countries were alien and almost like enemies. In spite of certain anti-capitalist slogans and a revolutionary technique, fascism was allied with property-owning and reactionary elements.

These were some odd aspects of fascism. The philosophy underlying it, if it has any, is difficult to grasp. It began, as we have seen, with the simple desire for power. When success came, an attempt was made to build up a philosophy round it. Giovanni Gentile was considered the official philosopher of fascism; he was also a fascist minister in the government. Gentile said that people should not seek self-realization through their personality or individual selves, as in democracy, but, according to fascism, through the acts of the transcendental ego as the world's self-consciousness (whatever this may mean—it is wholly beyond me). Thus in this view there was no room for individual liberty and personality, for the true reality and freedom of the individual was that which he gained by losing himself in something else—the State.

My personality is not suppressed, but uplifted, strengthened,

enlarged by being merged and restored in that of the family, the state, the spirit.

Again Gentile said:

Every force is moral force in so far as capable of influencing the will, whatever be the argument applied, the sermon or the cudgel.

All these were subsequent attempts to justify or explain a thing that happened. It was also said that fascism aimed at a "Corporative State," in which I suppose everybody pulled together for the common good. But no such State has so far appeared in Italy or elsewhere. Capitalism functioned in Italy more or less in the same way as in other capitalist countries, though some restrictions have been introduced.

As fascism spread in other countries, it became clear that it was not a peculiar Italian phenomenon. Whenever the workers became powerful and threatened the capitalistic State, the capitalist class naturally tried to save itself. If the owning and ruling class could not put down the workers in the ordinary democratic way by using the police and army, it adopted the fascist method. This consisted in creating a popular mass movement, with some slogans which appealed to the crowd. The backbone for this movement came from the lower-middle class, suffering from unemployment, and many of the politically backward and unorganized workers and peasants were also attracted to it by the slogans and hopes of bettering their position. Such a movement was financially helped by the big *bourgeoisie* who hoped to profit by it, and although it made violence a creed and a daily practice, the capitalist government of the country tolerated it to a large extent because it fought the common enemy—socialist labour.

Fascism thus appeared when the class conflicts between an

advancing socialism and an entrenched capitalism became bitter and critical. The owning class had no intention of giving up what it had, and so the conflict became intense. So long as capitalism could use the machinery of democratic institutions to hold power and keep down labour, democracy was allowed to flourish. When this was not possible, then capitalism discarded democracy and adopted the open fascist method of violence and terror.

## 49. SCIENCE GOES AHEAD

I have written already of the stupendous changes brought about in the nineteenth century by the application of science to industry and life. The world, and especially western Europe and North America, were changed out of all recognition; far more than they had changed for thousands of years previously. A surprising enough fact is the enormous increase in the population of Europe during the nineteenth century. In 1800 the population was 180 millions for the whole of Europe. Slowly in the course of ages it had risen to that figure. And then it shoots ahead, and in 1914 it was 460 millions. During this period also millions of Europeans emigrated to other continents, particularly to America, and we may put their number at about 40 millions. Thus Europe's population went up to about 500 millions from 180 millions, in the course of a little over 100 years. This increase was especially marked in the industrial countries of Europe. England, at the beginning of the eighteenth century, had a population of 5 millions only, and was the poorest country in western Europe. It became the richest country in the world, with a population of 40 millions.

This growth and wealth resulted from greater control over,

or rather understanding of, the processes of Nature which scientific knowledge made possible. There was great increase in knowledge, but do not imagine that this necessarily means an increase in wisdom. Men began to control and exploit the forces of Nature without having any clear ideas of what their aim in life was or should be. A powerful automobile is a useful and desirable thing, but one must know where to go in it. Unless properly guided, it may jump over a precipice. The President of the British Association of Science said: "The command of Nature has been put into man's hands before he knows how to command himself."

Most of us use the products of science—railways, aeroplanes, electricity, wireless, and thousands of others—without thinking of how they came into existence. We take them for granted, as if we were entitled to them as of right. And we are very proud of the fact that we live in an advanced age and are ourselves so very "advanced." There is no doubt that our age is a very different one from previous ages, and I think it is perfectly correct to say that it is far more advanced. But that is a different thing from saying that we as individuals or groups are more advanced. It would be the height of absurdity to say that because an engine-driver can run an engine and Plato or Socrates could not, therefore the engine-driver is more advanced than, or is superior to, Plato or Socrates. But it would be perfectly correct to say that the engine itself is a more advanced method of locomotion than Plato's chariot was.

We read so many books nowadays, most of them, I am afraid, rather silly books. In the old days people read few books, but they were good books, and they knew them well. One of the greatest of European philosophers, a man full of learning and wisdom, was Spinoza.\* He lived in the seventeenth century in Amsterdam. It is said that his library consisted of less than sixty volumes.

\* Baruch (or Benedict) Spinoza (1632-1677).

It is well, therefore, for us to realize that the great increase in knowledge in the world does not necessarily make us better or wiser. We must know how to use that knowledge properly before we can fully profit by it. We must know whither to go before we rush ahead in our powerful car. We must, that is, have some idea of what the aim and object of life should be. Vast numbers of people to-day have no such notion, and never worry themselves about it. They live in an age of science, but the ideas that govern them and their actions belong to ages long past. It is natural that difficulties and conflicts should arise. A clever monkey may learn to drive a car, but he is hardly a safe chauffeur.

Modern knowledge is amazingly intricate and widespread. Tens of thousands of investigators work away continuously, each experimenting in his particular department, each burrowing away in his own patch, and adding tiny bit by bit to the mountain of knowledge. The field of knowledge is so vast that each worker has to be a specialist in his own line. Often he is unaware of other departments of knowledge, and thus, though he is very learned in some branches of knowledge, he is unlearned about many others. It becomes difficult for him to take a wise view of the whole field of human activity. He is not cultured in the old sense of the word.

There are, of course, individuals who have risen above this narrow specialization and, while being specialists themselves, can take a wider view. Undeterred by war and human troubles, these people have been carrying on scientific researches, and during the last fifteen years or so have made remarkable contributions to knowledge. The greatest scientist of the day is supposed to be Albert Einstein,\* a German Jew, who had been turned out of Germany by the Hitler Government because they did not approve of Jews.

Einstein discovered some new fundamental laws of physics affecting the whole universe, through intricate calculations in

\* 1879-1955.

mathematics, and thereby he varied some of Newton's laws which had been accepted without question for two hundred years. Einstein's theory was confirmed in a most interesting way. According to this theory, light behaves in a particular way, and this could be tested during an eclipse of the sun. When such an eclipse occurred, it was found that light-rays did behave in that way, and so a conclusion reached by mathematical reasoning was confirmed by actual experiment.

I am not going to try to explain this theory to you, because it is very abstruse. It is called the Theory of Relativity. In dealing with the universe, Einstein found that the idea of time and the idea of space were, separately, not applicable. So he discarded both and put forward a new idea in which both were wedded together. This was the idea of space-time.

Einstein dealt with the universe. At the other end of the scale, scientists investigated the infinitely small. Take a pin's point—about as small a thing as you can see with the unaided eye. This pin's point, it was proved by scientific methods, is, in a way, like a universe in itself! It has molecules buzzing round each other; and each molecule consists of atoms which also go round and round without touching each other; and each atom consists of large numbers of electric particles or charges, or whatever they are, protons and electrons, which are also in constant and tremendously fast motion. Smaller still are positrons and neutrons and deuterons; and the average life of a positron has been estimated to be about a thousand-millionth part of a second! All this is, on an infinitely small scale, like the planets and the stars going round and round in space. Remember that the molecule is far too small to be seen even by the most powerful microscope. As for the atoms and the protons and electrons, it is difficult even to imagine them. And yet so advanced is scientific technique that quite a lot of information has been collected about these protons and electrons, and recently the atom was split.

In considering the latest theories of science one's head

reels, and it is very difficult to appreciate them. We know that our earth, which seems so big to us, is but a minor planet of the Sun, which is itself a very insignificant little star. The whole solar system is but a drop in the ocean of space. Distances are so great in the universe that it takes thousands and millions of years for light to reach us from some parts of it. Thus when we see a star at night, what we see is not what it is now, but what it was when the ray of light, which now reaches us, left it on its long journey, which may have taken hundreds or thousands of years. This is all very confusing to one's ideas of time and space, and that is why Einstein's space-time is far more helpful in considering such matters. If we leave out space and consider only time, the past and present get mixed up. For the star we see is present for us, and yet it is the past that we see. For ought we know it may have ceased to exist long ago, after the light-ray started on its journey.

I have said that our Sun is an unimportant little star. There are about 100,000 other stars, and all these together form what is called a galaxy.\* Most of the stars that we see at night form this galaxy. But we only see very few of the stars with our unaided eyes. Powerful telescopes help us to see far more. It is calculated by the experts in this science that there are as many as 100,000 different galaxies of stars in the universe!

Another astonishing fact. We are told that this universe is an expanding one. A mathematician, Sir James Jeans, compares it to a soap-bubble which is getting bigger and bigger, the universe being the surface of the bubble. And this bubble-like universe is so big that it takes millions and millions of years for light to travel across it.

If your capacity for astonishment is not exhausted, I have something more to tell you about this truly amazing universe. A famous Cambridge astronomer, Sir Arthur Eddington, tells

\* Actually, there are about 100 billion stars in "our" galaxy.

us that our universe is gradually going to pieces, like a clock that is run down, and unless wound up again somehow, will disintegrate. Of course all this happens in millions of years, so we need not worry.

Physics and chemistry were the leading sciences of the nineteenth century. They helped man to gain command over Nature or the outside world. Then scientific man began to look inside and to study himself. Biology became important; this was the study of life in man and animals and plants. Already it has made extraordinary progress, and biologists say that it will be possible soon to produce changes in the character or temperament of a person by injections, or other means. Thus it may perhaps be possible for a coward to be converted into a man of courage, or, what is more likely, for a government to deal with its critics and opponents by reducing their powers of resistance in this way.

From biology the next step has been psychology, the science which deals with the mind, with the thoughts and motives and fears and desires of human beings. Science is thus invading new fields and telling us more about ourselves, and so perhaps helping us to command ourselves.

It is interesting to notice how the study of certain animals has helped in the development of science. The poor frog was cut up to find out how nerves and muscles functioned. The tiny and insignificant little fly which often sits on over-ripe bananas, hence called the banana fly, has led to more knowledge about heredity than anything else. From careful observations of this fly it has been found how the characteristics of one generation pass on by inheritance to the next generation. To some extent this helps in understanding the working of heredity in human beings.

An even more absurd animal to teach us much is the common grasshopper. Long and careful study of grasshoppers by American observers has shown how sex is determined in animals as well as in human beings. We know a great deal



now as to how the little embryo, right at the beginning of its career, becomes male or female, developing gradually into a tiny male or female animal, a little boy or girl.

The fourth instance is that of the ordinary household dog. A famous Russian scientist of our time, Pavlov,\* began observing dogs carefully, especially noting when their mouths watered at the sight of food. He actually measured this saliva in the dog's mouth. This watering of the dog's mouth at the sight of food is an automatic occurrence, an "unconditioned reflex" as it is called. Just as when an infant sneezes or yawns or stretches itself without previous experience.

Then Pavlov tried to produce "conditioned reflexes"—that is, he taught the dog to expect food at a certain signal. The result was that this signal became associated in the dog's mind with food, and produced the same result as food, although no food was present.

These experiments on dogs and their saliva have been made the basis of human psychology, and it has been shown how a human being in infancy has a number of "unconditioned reflexes," and as he grows he develops more and more "conditioned reflexes." In fact, all we learn is based on this. We form habits in this way, and we learn languages, etc. Our actions are governed by our reflexes, which of course are both pleasant and unpleasant. There is the common reflex of fear. No knowledge of Pavlov's experiments is necessary for a man to jump away with great rapidity, and without thinking, when he sees a snake near him, or even a bit of string looking like a snake.

Pavlov's experiments have revolutionized the whole science of psychology. Some of them are very interesting, but I cannot go into this question any further here. I must add, though, that there are several other important methods of psychological inquiry.

I have mentioned these few instances to give you some

\* Ivan Petrovich Pavlov (1849-1936).

idea of the methods of scientific work. The old metaphysical way was to talk vaguely about big things which it was not easy, or even possible, to analyse or understand fully. People argued and argued about them and got very heated, but as there was no final test of the truth or otherwise of their arguments, the matter always remained in the air. They were so busy in arguing about the other world that they did not deign to observe the common things of this world. The method of science is the exact opposite. Careful observations are made of what appear to be trivial and insignificant facts, and these lead to important results. Theories are then framed on these results, and these theories are again checked by further observations and experiments.

This does not mean that science does not go wrong. It often goes wrong, and has to retrace its steps. But the scientific method seems to be the only correct way of approaching a question. Science to-day has lost all the arrogance and self-sufficiency which it had during the nineteenth century. It is proud of its achievements, and yet it is humble before the vast and ever-widening ocean of knowledge that still lies unexplored. The wise man realizes how little he knows; it is the foolish person who imagines that he knows everything. And so with science. The more it advances, the less dogmatic does it get, and the more hesitating is its answer to the questions that may be put to it. "The progress of science," says Eddington, "is to be measured not by the number of questions we can answer, but by the number of questions we can ask." That is perhaps so, but still science does answer more and more questions, and helps us to understand life, and thus enables us, if we will but take advantage of it, to live a better life, directed to a purpose worth having. It illumines the dark corners of life and makes us face reality, instead of the vague confusion of unreason.

## 50. THE GOOD AND BAD

### APPLICATIONS OF SCIENCE

Human thought is ever advancing, ever grappling with and trying to understand the problems of Nature and the universe, and what I tell you to-day may be wholly insufficient and out-of-date to-morrow. To me there is a great fascination in this challenge of the human mind, and how it soars up to the uttermost corners of the universe and tries to fathom its mysteries, and dares to grasp and measure what appear to be the infinitely big as well as the infinitely small.

All this is what is called "pure" science—that is, science which has no direct or immediate effect on life. It is obvious that the Theory of Relativity, or the idea of Space-time, or the size of the universe, have nothing to do with our day-to-day lives. Most of these theories depend on higher mathematics, and these intricate and upper regions of mathematics are, in this sense, pure science. Most people are not much interested in this kind of science; they are naturally far more attracted by the applications of science to every-day life. It is this applied science that has revolutionized life during the last 150 years. Indeed, life to-day is governed and conditioned entirely by these offshoots of science, and it is very difficult for us to imagine existence without them. People often talk about the good old days of the past, of a golden age that is gone. Some periods of past history are singularly attractive, and in some ways they may even have been superior to our time. But even this attraction is probably due more to distance and to a certain vagueness than to anything else, and we are apt to think of an age as being great because of some great men who adorned it and dominated it. The fate of the com-

mon people right through history has been a miserable one. Science brought them some relief from their age-long burdens.

Look around you, and you will find that most of the things that you can see are somehow connected with science. We travel by the methods of applied science, we communicate with each other in the same way, our food is often produced that way and carried from one place to another. The newspaper we read could not be produced, nor our books, nor the paper I write on or the pen I write with, by methods other than those of science. Sanitation and health and the conquest over some diseases depend on science. For the modern world it is quite impossible to do without applied science. Apart from all other reasons, one reason is a final and conclusive one: without science there would not be enough food for the world's population, and half of it, or more, would die off from starvation. I have told you how population has gone up with a bound during the last 100 years. This swollen population can only live if the help of science is taken to produce food and transport it from one place to another.

Ever since science introduced the big machine into human life there has been a continuous process of improving it. Innumerable little changes are being made from year to year, and even month to month, which go to make the machine more efficient and less dependent on human labour. These improvements in technique, these advances in technology, as it is called, have become especially rapid during the last thirty years of the twentieth century. The rate of change in recent years—and it is still going on—has been so tremendous, that it is revolutionizing industry and methods of production as much as the Industrial Revolution of the second half of the eighteenth century. This new revolution is largely due to the increasing use of electricity in production. Thus we have had a great Electrical Revolution in the twentieth

century, especially in the United States of America, and this is leading to entirely new conditions of life. Just as the Industrial Revolution of the eighteenth century led to the Machine Age, the Electrical Revolution is now leading to the Power Age. Electric power, which is used for industries, railways, and numerous other purposes, dominates everything. It was because of this that Lenin, looking far ahead, decided to build all over Soviet Russia huge hydro-electric power works.

This application of electric power to industry, together with other improvements, often results in a great change without costing much. Thus a slight re-arrangement of electrically-driven machinery might double the production. This is largely due to the progressive elimination of the human factor which is slow and liable to err. Thus, as machines go on improving, fewer workers are employed in them. Huge machines are now controlled by one man handling some levers and switches. This results in increasing the production of manufactured goods enormously, and at the same time throwing out many workers from the factory, as they are no longer required. At the same time advances in technology are so rapid, that, often by the time a new machine is installed in a factory, it is itself partly obsolete because of new improvements.

The process of machines replacing workers had, of course, occurred from the early days of machinery, and, as I think I have told you, there were many riots in those days, and angry workmen broke the new machines. It was found, however, that ultimately machinery resulted in more employment. As a worker could produce far more goods with the help of machinery, his wages went up and the prices of goods went down. The workers and common people could thus buy more of these goods. Their standards of living went up and the demands for manufactured goods grew. This resulted in more factories being built and more men being employed.

Thus, although machinery displaced workers in each factory as a whole, far more workers were employed because there were many more factories.

This process went on for a long time, helped as it was by the exploitation by industrial countries of distant markets in backward countries. During the past few years this process seems to have stopped. Perhaps no further expansion is possible under the present capitalistic system, and some change in the system is necessary. Modern industry goes in for "mass production," but this can only be carried on if the goods so produced are bought by the masses. If the masses are too poor or are unemployed, then they cannot buy these goods.

Greater production by up-to-date machinery means, or ought to mean, greater wealth for the nation and higher standards of living for every one. Instead, it has resulted in poverty and terrible suffering. One would have thought that a scientific solution of the problem would not be difficult. Perhaps it is not. But the real difficulty comes in trying to solve it scientifically and reasonably. For in doing so many vested interests are affected, and they are powerful enough to control their governments. Then, again, the problem is essentially an international one, and to-day national rivalries prevent an international solution. Soviet Russia is applying the methods of science to similar problems, but because she has to proceed nationally, the rest of the world being capitalist and hostile to her, she has far greater difficulties than she would otherwise have had. The world is essentially international to-day, although its political structure lags behind and is narrowly national. For socialism to succeed finally, it will have to be international world socialism. The hands of the clock cannot be put back, nor can the international structure of to-day, incomplete as it is, be suppressed in favour of national isolation. An attempt at the intensification of nationalism is bound to fail in the end, because it runs counter to the fundamental international character of world economy

to-day. It may be, of course, that in so failing it may carry the world with it, and involve what is called modern civilization in a common disaster.

The danger of such a disaster is by no means remote and unthinkable. Science, as we have seen, has brought many good things in its train, but science has also added enormously to the horrors of war. States and governments have often neglected many branches of science, pure and applied. But they have not neglected the warlike aspects of science, and they have taken full advantage of the latest scientific technique to arm and strengthen themselves. Most States rest, in the final analysis, on force, and scientific technique is making these governments so strong that they can tyrannize over people without, as a rule, any fear of consequences. The old days of popular risings against tyrannical governments and the building of barricades and fights in the open streets, such as occurred in the great French Revolution, are long past. It is impossible now for an unarmed or even armed crowd to fight with an organized and well-equipped State force. The State army itself may turn against the Government, as happened in the Russian Revolution, but, unless this happens, it cannot be forcibly defeated. Hence the necessity has arisen for people, struggling for freedom, to seek other and more peaceful methods of mass action.

Science thus leads to groups or oligarchies controlling States, and to the destruction of individual liberty and the old nineteenth century ideas of democracy. Such oligarchies arise in different States, sometimes outwardly paying homage to the principles of democracy, at other times openly condemning them. These different State oligarchies come into conflict with each other and nations go to war. Such a big war to-day or in the future may well destroy not only these oligarchies, but civilization itself. Or it may be that out of its ashes an international socialist order might arise, as expected by the Marxist philosophy.

War is not a pleasant subject to contemplate in all its horrid reality, and because of this the reality is hidden behind fine phrases and brave music and bright uniforms. But it is necessary to know something of what war means to-day. For if industrial technique has advanced tenfold during the last few years, the science of war has advanced a hundred-fold. War is no longer an affair of infantry charges and cavalry dashes; the old foot-soldier and cavalry man are almost as useless now in war as the bow and arrow. War to-day is an affair of tanks, aeroplanes and bombs, and especially the latter two. There is worse to come. The bombs thrown from the aeroplanes might contain germs and bacteria of various horrible diseases, so that a whole city might be infected with these diseases. This kind of "bacteriological warfare" can be carried on in other ways also: by infecting food and drinking-water and by animal-carriers.

All this sounds monstrous and incredible, and so it is. Not even a monster would like to do it. But incredible things happen when people are thoroughly afraid and are fighting a life-and-death struggle. The very fear that the enemy country might adopt such unfair and monstrous methods induces each country to be first in the field. For the weapons are so terrible that the country that uses them first has a great advantage. Fear has big eyes!

The real fighting in the next big war will take place not at the front, where some armies might dig themselves in and face each other, but behind the fronts, in the cities and homes of the civilian population. It may even be that the safest place during the war will be the front, for the troops will be fully protected there from air attacks and poison gases and infection! There will be no such protection for the men left behind, or the women, or the children.

What will be the result of all this? Universal destruction? The end of the fine structure of culture and civilization that centuries of effort have built up?



What will happen no one knows. We cannot tear the veil from the future. We see two processes going on to-day in the world, two rival and contradictory processes. One is the progress of co-operation and reason, and the building up of the structure of civilization; the other a destructive process, a tearing up of everything, an attempt by mankind to commit suicide. And both go faster and faster, and both arm themselves with the weapons and technique of science. Which will win?

## 51. CAPITALISM VS. DEMOCRACY

Parliament and democracy are only considered desirable by the possessing classes so long as they maintain existing conditions. That is, of course, not real democracy; it is the exploitation of the democratic idea for undemocratic purposes. Real democracy has had no chance to exist so far, for there is an essential contradiction between the capitalist system and democracy. Democracy, if it means anything, means equality; not merely the equality of possessing a vote, but economic and social equality. Capitalism means the very opposite: a few people holding economic power and using this to their own advantage. They make laws to keep their own privileged position secure, and anybody who breaks these laws becomes a disturber of law and order whom society must punish. Thus there is no equality under this system, and the liberty allowed is only within the limits of capitalist laws meant to preserve capitalism.

The conflict between capitalism and democracy is inherent and continuous; it is often hidden by misleading propaganda and by the outward forms of democracy, such as parliaments, and the sopas that the owning classes throw to the other

classes to keep them more or less contented. A time comes when there are no more sops left to be thrown, and then the conflict between the two groups comes to a head, for now the struggle is for the real thing, economic power in the State. When that stage comes, all the supporters of capitalism, who had so far played with different parties, band themselves together to face the danger to their vested interests. Liberals and such-like groups disappear, and the forms of democracy are put aside. It seems certain that even if capitalism succeeds in surviving, it will do so in a greatly changed form. And this, of course, will be but another stage in the long conflict. For modern industry and modern life itself, under any form of capitalism, are battlefields where armies are continually clashing against each other.

Some people imagine that all this trouble and conflict and misery could be avoided if a few sensible persons were in charge of various governments, and that it is the folly or knavery of politicians and statesmen that is at the bottom of everything. They think that if good people would but get together they could convert the wicked by moral exhortations and pointing out to them the error of their ways. This is a very misleading idea, for the fault does not lie with individuals, but with a wrong system. So long as that system endures, these individuals must act in the way they do. Groups that occupy dominant or privileged positions, either foreign national groups governing another nation, or economic groups within a nation, convince themselves by an amazing self-deception and hypocrisy that their special privileges are a just reward of merit. Any one who challenges this position seems to them a knave and a scoundrel and an upsetter of settled conditions. It is impossible to convince a dominant group that its privileges are unjust, and that it should give them up. Individuals may sometimes be so convinced, though rarely, but groups never. And so, inevitably,

come clashes and conflicts and revolution, and infinite suffering and misery.

## 52. THE SHADOW OF WAR

The whole past tendency has been towards greater interdependence between nations, a greater internationalism. Even though separate independent national States remained, an enormous and intricate structure of international relations and trade grew up. This process went so far as to conflict with the national States and with nationalism itself. The next natural step was a socialized international structure. Capitalism, having had its day, had reached the stage when it was time for it to retire in favour of socialism. But unhappily such a voluntary retirement never takes place. Because crisis and collapse threatened it, it has withdrawn into its shell and tried to reverse the past tendency towards interdependence. Hence economic nationalism. The question is if this can succeed, and even if it does so, for how long?

Feudalism, capitalism, socialism, communism—so many isms! And behind them all stalks opportunism! But there is also idealism for those who care to have it; not the idealism of empty fancies and an imagination run riot, but the idealism of working for a great human purpose, a great ideal which we seek to make real. Somewhere George Bernard Shaw has said:—

This is the true joy in life, the being used for a purpose recognized by yourself as a mighty one; the being thoroughly worn out before you are thrown on the scrap heap; the being a force of nature, instead of a feverish, selfish little clod of ailments and grievances, complaining that the world will not devote itself to making you happy.

Our incursions into history have shown us how the world has grown more and more compact, how different parts have come together and become interdependent. The world has indeed become one single inseparable whole, each part influencing, and being influenced by, the other. It is quite impossible now to have a separate history of nations. We have outgrown that stage, and only a single world history, connecting the different threads from all the nations, and seeking to find the real forces that move them, can now be written with any useful purpose.

Even in past times, when nations were cut off from each other by many physical and other barriers, we have seen how common international and inter-continental forces shaped them. Great individuals have always counted in history, for the human factor is important in every crisis of destiny; but greater than any individual are the mighty forces at work which, almost blindly and sometimes cruelly, forge ahead, pushing us hither and thither.

So it is to-day with us. Mighty forces are at work moving the hundreds of millions of human beings, and they go ahead like an earthquake or some other upheaval of Nature. We cannot stop them, however much we may try, and yet we may, in our own little corner of the world, make some slight difference to them in speed or direction. According to our different temperaments we meet them—some frightened by them, others welcoming them, some trying to combat them, others submitting helplessly to the heavy hand of fate, while still others try to ride the tempest and control it a little and direct it, willingly facing the perils that this involves for the joy of helping actively in a mighty process.

There is no peace for us in this turbulent twentieth century. "The whole world is in revolution," said the fascist, Mussolini. "Events themselves are a tremendous force pushing us on like some implacable will." And the great Communist, Trotsky, also warns us of this century not to expect

too much of peace and comfort. "It is clear," he says, "that the twentieth century is the most disturbed century within the memory of humanity. Any contemporary of ours who wants peace and comfort before everything else has chosen a bad time to be born."

The whole world is in labour, and the shadow of war and revolution lies heavy everywhere. If we cannot escape from this inevitable destiny of ours, how shall we face it? Ostrich-like, shall we hide our heads from it? Or shall we play a brave part in the shaping of events and, facing risks and perils if need be, have the joy of great and noble adventure, and the feeling that our "steps are merging with those of history"?

All of us, or at any rate those who think, are looking forward expectantly to the future as it unrolls itself and becomes the present. Some await the outcome with hope, others with fear. Will it be a fairer and a happier world, where the good things of life will not be reserved for a few, but are freely enjoyed by the masses. Or a harsher world than even to-day, from which many of the amenities of present-day civilization have gone after fierce and destructive wars? These are two extremes. Either may occur, it seems improbable that a middle course will prevail.

While we wait and watch, we work for the kind of world we would like to have. Man has not progressed from his brute stage by helpless submission to the ways of Nature, but often by a defiance of them and a desire to dominate them for human advantage.

Such is To-day. The making of To-morrow lies with the millions of girls and boys all over the world who are growing up and training themselves to take part in this To-morrow.

## 53. THE LESSON OF HISTORY

History is not pleasant. Man, in spite of his great and vaunted progress, is still a very unpleasant and selfish animal. And yet perhaps it is possible to see the silver lining of progress right through the long and dismal record of selfishness and quarrelsomeness and inhumanity of man. I am a bit of an optimist and am inclined to take a hopeful view of things, but optimism must not blind us to the dark spots around us and to the danger of an unthinking optimism itself being very much misplaced. For the world as it has been and is still gives little enough ground for optimism. It is a hard place for the idealist and for him who does not take his beliefs on trust. All manner of questions arise for which there is no straight answer; all manner of doubts come which do not easily vanish. Why should there be so much folly and misery in the world? That is the old question that troubled Prince Siddhartha 2,500 years ago. The story is told that he asked himself this question many a time before enlightenment came to him, and he became the Buddha. He asked himself, it is said:

How can it be that Brahm  
Would make a world and keep it miserable,  
Since if all powerful, he leaves it so,  
He is not good, and if not powerful,  
He is not God?

In our own country the fight for freedom goes on, and yet many of our countrymen pay little heed to it and argue and quarrel among themselves, and think in terms of a sect or a religious group or narrow class, and forget the larger good. And some, blind to the vision of freedom,

... took truce with tyrants and grew tame,  
 And gathered up cast crowns and creeds to wear,  
 And rags and shards regilded.

In the name of law and order, tyranny flourishes and tries to crush those who will not submit to it. Strange that the very thing that should be a refuge of the weak and the oppressed should become a weapon in the hand of the oppressors. I must give one other quotation which appeals to me and which seems to fit in with our present state. It is from a book of Montesquieu, a French philosopher of the eighteenth century:

*Il n'y a point de plus cruelle tyrannie que celle que l'on exerce à l'ombre des lois et avec les couleurs de la justice, lorsqu'on va pour ainsi dire noyer des malheureux sur la planche même sur laquelle ils s'étaient sauvés.*

I have given the barest outline; this is not history; it is just fleeting glimpses of our long past. If history interests you, if you feel some of the fascination of history, you will find your way to many books which will help you to unravel the threads of past ages. But reading books alone will not help. If you would know the past you must look upon it with sympathy and with understanding. To understand a person who lived long ago, you will have to understand his environment, the conditions under which he lived, the ideas that filled his mind. It is absurd for us to judge of past people as if they lived now and thought as we do. There is no one to defend slavery to-day, and yet the great Plato held that slavery was essential. Within recent times scores of thousands of lives were given in an effort to retain slavery in the United States. We cannot judge the past from the standards of the present. Every one will willingly admit this. But every one will not

admit the equally absurd habit of judging the present by the standards of the past. The various religions have especially helped in petrifying old beliefs and faiths and customs, which may have had some use in the age and country of their birth, but which are singularly unsuitable in our present age.

If, then, you look upon past history with the eye of sympathy, the dry bones will fill up with flesh and blood, and you will see a mighty procession of living men and women and children in every age and every clime, different from us and yet very like us, with much the same human virtues and human failings. History is not a magic show, but there is plenty of magic in it for those who have eyes to see.

Innumerable pictures from the gallery of history crowd our minds. Egypt—Babylon—Nineveh—the old Indian civilizations—the coming of the Aryans to India and their spreading out over Europe and Asia—the wonderful record of Chinese culture—Knossos and Greece—Imperial Rome and Byzantium—the triumphant march of the Arabs across two continents—the renaissance of Indian culture and its decay—the little-known Maya and Aztec civilizations of America—the vast conquests of the Mongols—the Middle Ages in Europe with their wonderful Gothic cathedrals—the coming of Islam to India and the Moghal Empire—the Renaissance of learning and art in western Europe—the discovery of America and the sea-routes to the East—the beginnings of Western aggression in the East—the coming of the big machine and the development of capitalism—the spread of industrialism and European domination and imperialism—and the wonders of science in the modern world.

Great empires have risen and fallen and been forgotten by man for thousands of years, till their remains were dug up again by patient explorers from under the sands that covered them. And yet many an idea, many a fancy, has survived and proved stronger and more persistent than the empire.



Egypt's might is tumbled down,  
     Down a-down the deeps of thought;  
 Greece is fallen and Troy town,  
 Glorious Rome hath lost her crown,  
     Venice' pride is nought.  
 But the dreams their children dreamed,  
     Fleeting, unsubstantial, vain,  
 Shadowy as the shadows seemed,  
 Airy nothing, as they deemed,  
     These remain.

So sings Mary Coleridge.

The past brings us many gifts; indeed, all that we have to-day of culture, civilization, science, or knowledge of some aspects of the truth, is a gift of the distant or recent past to us. It is right that we acknowledge our obligation to the past. But the past does not exhaust our duty or obligation. We owe a duty to the future also, and perhaps that obligation is even greater than the one we owe to the past. For the past is past and done with, we cannot change it; the future is yet to come, and perhaps we may be able to shape it a little. If the past have given us some part of the truth, the future also hides many aspects of the truth, and invites us to search for them. But often the past is jealous of the future and holds us in a terrible grip, and we have to struggle with it to get free to face and advance towards the future.

History, it is said, has many lessons to teach us; and there is another saying that history never repeats itself. Both are true, for we cannot learn anything from it by slavishly trying to copy it, or by expecting it to repeat itself or remain stagnant; but we can learn something from it by prying behind it and trying to discover the forces that move it. Even so, what we get is seldom a straight answer. "History," says Karl Marx, "has no other way of answering old questions than by putting new ones."

The old days were days of faith, blind, unquestioning faith.

The wonderful temples and mosques and cathedrals of past centuries could never have been built but for the overpowering faith of the architects and builders and people generally. The very stones that they reverently put one on top of the other, or carved into beautiful designs, tell us of this faith. The old temple spire, the mosque with its slender minarets, the Gothic cathedral—all of them pointing upward with an amazing intensity of devotion, as if offering a prayer in stone or marble to the sky above—thrill us even now, though we may be lacking in that faith of old of which they are the embodiments. But the days of that faith are gone, and gone with them is that magic touch in stone. Thousands of temples and mosques and cathedrals continue to be built, but they lack the spirit that made them live during the Middle Ages. There is little difference between them and the commercial offices which are so representative of our age.

Our age is a different one; it is an age of disillusion, of doubt and uncertainty and questioning. We can no longer accept many of the ancient beliefs and customs; we have no more faith in them, in Asia or in Europe or America. So we search for new ways, new aspects of the truth more in harmony with our environment. And we question each other and debate and quarrel and evolve any number of "isms" and philosophies. As in the days of Socrates, we live in an age of questioning, but that questioning is not confined to a city like Athens; it is world-wide.

Sometimes the injustice, the unhappiness, the brutality of the world oppress us and darken our minds, and we see no way out. With Matthew Arnold, we feel that there is no hope in the world and that all we can do is to be true to one another.

For the world which seems  
To lie before us, like a land of dreams,  
So various, so beautiful, so new,

Hath really neither joy, nor love, nor light,  
 Nor certitude, nor peace, nor help for pain;  
 And we are here, as on a darkling plain  
 Swept with confused alarms of struggle and flight,  
 Where ignorant armies clash by night.

And yet if we take such a dismal view we have not learnt aright the lesson of life or of history. For history teaches us of growth and progress and of the possibility of an infinite advance for man. And life is rich and varied, and though it has many swamps and marshes and muddy places, it has also the great sea, and the mountains, and snow, and glaciers, and wonderful starlit nights (especially in gaol!), and the love of family and friends, and the comradeship of workers in a common cause, and music, and books and the empire of ideas. So that each one of us may well say:—

Lord, though I lived on earth, the child of earth,  
 Yet was I fathered by the starry sky.

It is easy to admire the beauties of the universe and to live in a world of thought and imagination. But to try to escape in this way from the unhappiness of others, caring little what happens to them, is no sign of courage or fellow-feeling. Thought, in order to justify itself, must lead to action. "Action is the end of thought," says our friend Romain Rolland. "All thought which does not look towards action is an abortion and a treachery. If then we are the servants of thought we must be the servants of action."

People avoid action often because they are afraid of the consequences, for action means risk and danger. Danger seems terrible from a distance; it is not so bad if you have a close look at it. And often it is a pleasant companion, adding to the zest and delight of life. The ordinary course of life becomes dull at times, and we take too many things for granted and have no joy in them. And yet how we appreciate these com-

mon things of life when we have lived without them for a while! Many people go up high mountains and risk life and limb for the joy of the climb and the exhilaration that comes from a difficulty surmounted, a danger overcome; and because of the danger that hovers all around them, their perceptions get keener, their joy of the life which hangs by a thread, the more intense.

All of us have our choice of living in the valleys below, with their unhealthy mists and fogs, but giving a measure of bodily security; or of climbing the high mountains, with risk and danger for companions, to breathe the pure air above, and take joy in the distant views, and welcome the rising sun.

I have given you many quotations and extracts from poets and others. I shall finish up with one more. It is from the *Gitanjali*; it is a poem, or prayer, by Rabindra Nath Tagore:—

Where the mind is without fear and the head is held high;  
 Where knowledge is free;  
 Where the world has not been broken up into fragments by  
     narrow domestic walls;  
 Where words come out from the depth of truth;  
 Where tireless striving stretches its arms towards perfection;  
 Where the clear stream of reason has not lost its way into the  
     dreary desert sand of dead habit;  
 Where the mind is led forward by thee into ever-widening  
     thought and action—  
 Into that heaven of freedom, my Father, let my country awake.



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